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CITY

JOURNAL

Education:

Why Johnny's Teacher Can't Teach

Heather Mac Donald

Why New York Can't Build Schools

E.V. Kontorovich

The Rebirth of American History?

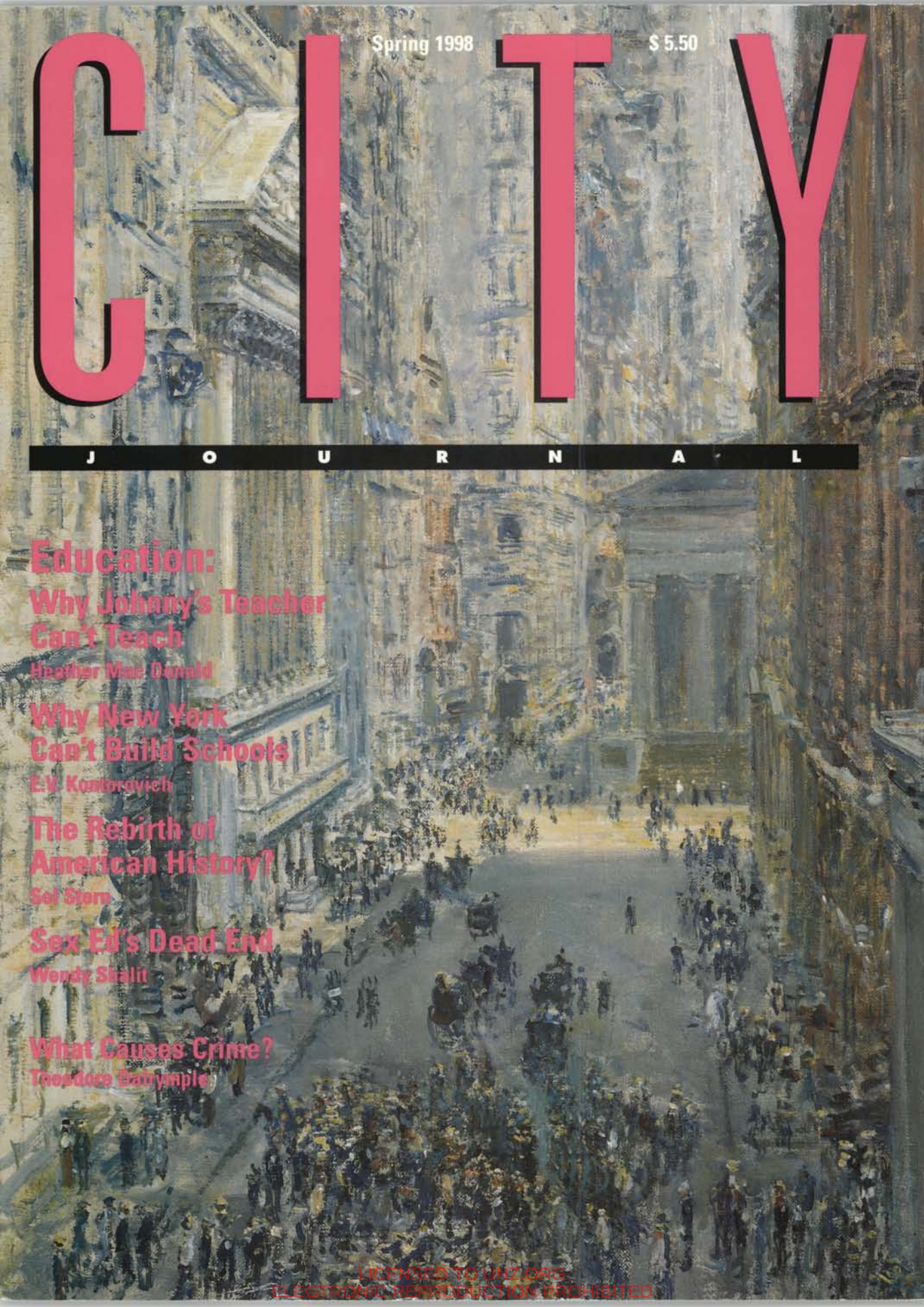
Sol Stern

Sex Ed's Dead End

Wendy Shalit

What Causes Crime?

Theodore Dalrymple



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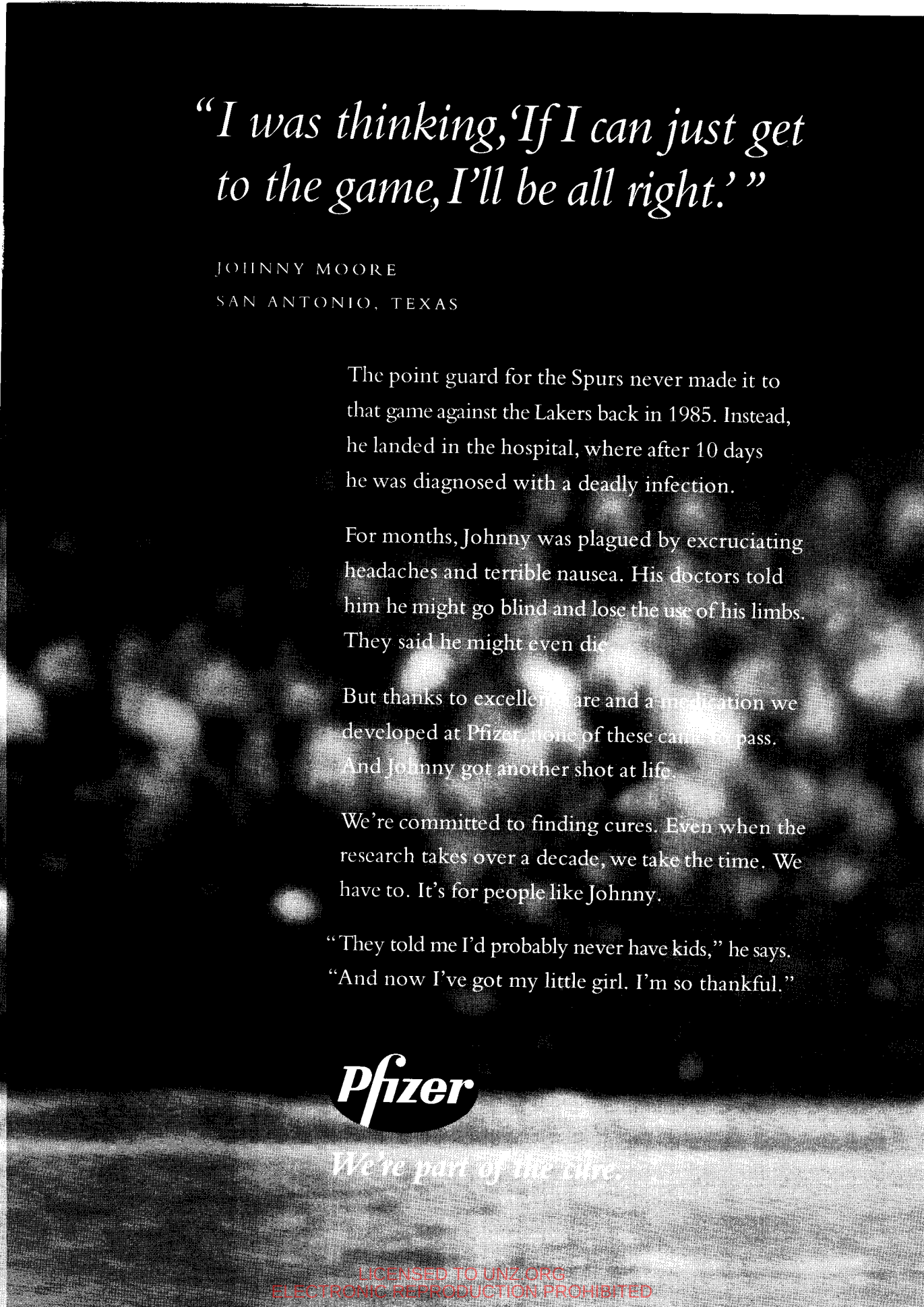
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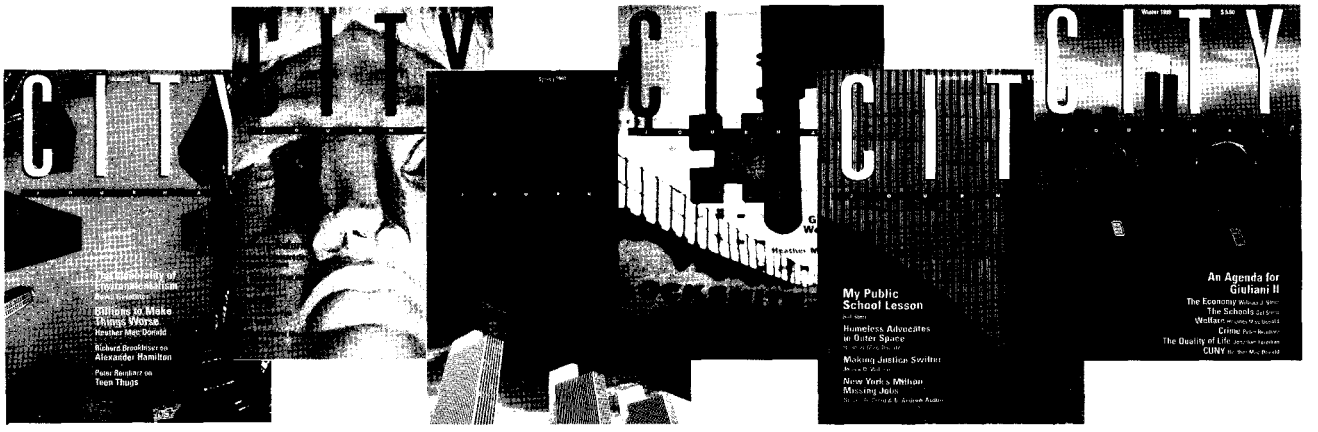

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In Prospect

We're pleased, if a bit stunned, at the reception accorded our last issue, "An Agenda for Giuliani II." The mayor incorporated into his January State of the City speech a host of our suggestions, on matters from illegitimacy to the public schools to City University, and he devoted the whole of a second speech the following month to our ideas on how to make New York a more civil city. That "civility" speech in particular—in which the mayor generously acknowledged *City Journal*'s contribution—hit a nerve not just locally but throughout the U.S. The mayor found himself on national television expounding his views, and the response of Florida's Republican Party chairman was typical: "His advocacy of civility is a message that most Americans kind of long for."

Only Giuliani's hometown greeted the speech with bemusement, even hostility. Here, too many remain trapped, like fossils in limestone, in a worldview, formed in the 1960s, deeply suspicious of civility. Thousands of New Yorkers see the mayor's call to civility as a threat—from those who man the public and private social service agencies (and have a financial as well as an ideological stake in the sixties' nostrums) to Gotham's jean-clad midtown journalists, who tote laptop computers in satchels that look like castoffs from the Paris student protesters of 1968 and who cherish a fantasy of perpetual countercultural rebelliousness. The threat they perceive is real. For the mayor's speech is one more sign that the sixties are over.

That period's slogans—let it all hang out; if it feels good, do it—rested on a conception of personal authenticity unadulterated by the stifling conventionality of an uptight and hypocritical society. They rested, too, on belief in a personal morality beyond the claims of mere law. These ideas found embodiment in (among other things) the sexual revolution and today's cultural norm of expressive individualism, and they went hand in hand with a rejection of tradition, manners, decorum, standards—all elements of civility. So just as Mayor Giuliani's successful campaign against crime flies in the face of such sixties' shibboleths as the idea that the system rather than the criminal is to blame for crime, so his call to civility rejects that era's claims to unlimited personal autonomy and reasserts the claims of others, of the community, upon the self. Teach kids civics in the schools or tell people not to blast music, Giuliani's critics fear, and next thing you know you'll have to limit your sexual freedom and accept that your life is tightly bounded by the responsibilities of adulthood and citizenship.

The ideas of the sixties nearly killed the cities—the era's political ideas on crime, poverty, and welfare and also its cultural ideas on drugs and personal responsibility, on sex, marriage, and illegitimacy. Its contempt for civility also degraded urban life. Cities are among mankind's greatest works of art, a man-made realm where people live so close together that they must have attained a high measure of civilization to be capable of all the exquisite mutual adjustments necessary for our life together.

Many of these mutual adjustments are matters not only of manners and customs but also of law—traffic laws and nuisance regulations, for example, which the city has largely not enforced for years, in the belief that loud noise was a cultural norm for part of New York's population or that rude, reckless driving is harmless. But of course all these nuisances, even when they are not actually dangerous, make people unwilling to live in big cities. Just as the Giuliani administration has disproved the old orthodoxy about policing and shown that attention to little offenses will prevent big ones from happening, it may well be about to disprove an even older orthodoxy: that you can't legislate morality. The fact is, law, morality, customs, and manners are all points on a single continuum. At least if you enforce the existing laws against incivility, you can impress upon people their responsibilities to one another. That consciousness in turn will make them genuinely more civil. And that will further restore the city's health and make it a richer medium in which every individual can accomplish the highest development of which human nature is capable. •

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Soundings

Sharpton's Lost Opportunity

Briefly and, as it turns out, naively, some of us hoped we'd see a reformed Reverend Al Sharpton on display at his trial in Poughkeepsie. After all, wouldn't a more moderate public persona improve his chances for political respectability? Though Sharpton couldn't erase the false rape accusation he made against former Dutchess County prosecutor Steven Pagones, perhaps he would admit he was wrong about Tawana Brawley and say that he now hoped to bring blacks and whites together.

Of course, he has done nothing of the kind. Once Sharpton took the stand, he started shouting at Pagones's lawyer—and this was after three months of courtroom antics by his lawyers and fellow defendants, crying "racism" every time things didn't go their way. The reverend's claims defy belief: he contends that he never spoke to Brawley about her rape and that her family leaned on him as merely a spiritual advisor. Even worse, Sharpton has tried to wrap himself in Martin Luther King Jr.'s mantle: "I've been indicted, I've been stabbed, and now I've been sued. I have every base covered for being a great civil rights leader," he says—as if King's greatness came from victimhood.

And there's the rub. Underneath Sharpton's seemingly foolish courtroom behavior rests a pernicious belief that too many black Americans share: whether or not Tawana Brawley's rape really happened doesn't matter, because blacks are victims of white racism. As victims, blacks can do or say anything to hold whites guilty for their plight—yet no one can hold them accountable in turn.

So Sharpton wins, no matter what. Even if the jury finds him guilty, the verdict will enhance his victim status. He'll run for office again, perhaps for mayor in 2001, and his mostly minority supporters will rally round, seeing him as a martyr for racial justice.

Sadly, we'll never know if Sharpton might have moved those supporters beyond the racial grievance that tells them that facts don't matter and, in the end, robs them of hope. Popular as he is, he is following, not leading and seems trapped in his own myth of the powerless and put upon, eternally raging black man.

—Tamar Jacoby

Smelling a Plot

Now that Valentine's Day has come and gone, it's time for a lesson, not in love, but in economics. You would think that at least one official of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs would have passed Economics 101, but that agency, like almost every public agency in the city, seems without an understanding of how markets work.

Convinced that some dastardly conspiracy jacks up the price of flowers every February 14, the department launched an investigation that confirmed its worst suspicions: rose prices were 42 percent higher on February 14 than on any other day of the year, with the cost of a dozen long-stemmed blooms soaring to a prickly $65. Were the florists price gouging? "Subsequently," reported the *New York Times*, also apparently without a grasp of Econ 101, "seemingly everyone involved in the flower trade played a game of ring around the rosy, as florists blamed wholesalers, wholesalers blamed growers, and growers blamed the weather."

As any economist would tell you, the economics of roses are no different from the economics of tomatoes: price reflects supply and demand. Since demand spikes up on Valentine's Day, the price rises to allocate the available supply. If we could store roses the way we store diamonds, then the price wouldn't change very much, because wholesalers would just draw on accumulated inventory. But roses are perishable, so wholesalers can't store them. And sure enough, the price of candy didn't go up at all on Valentine's Day, though seasonal demand for it increases far more than the demand for roses. Why? Candy isn't highly perishable.

If the Department of Consumer Affairs needed an investigation to learn this, maybe taxpayers should ask for their money back.

—Wendy Shalit

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Soundings

Silver Cries Anti-Semitism

In January, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver accused state Republican Chairman Bill Powers of anti-Semitism. What provoked Silver's charge? A Powers fund-raising letter that doesn't refer to Silver as a Jew or, for that matter, to Zionists, Freemasons, or rootless cosmopolitans. The letter does feature, though, a photograph of Silver sitting behind the governor's desk, with the caption: "Governor Shelly Silver? That's a scary thought."

JUDITH TURNER (4)

Silver says that by including the photo, Powers reveals his true agenda: to stir up anti-Semitic feelings among potential donors. Presumably, Silver believes that the photo would tip off Jew-wary Republicans, who will bankroll the GOP to keep the governor's mansion *Judenrein*—a strange delusion about Republicans. Silver demands the GOP return the contributions the mailing raised.

But slow down. Since the devout speaker wears a yarmulke, if Powers wanted to accentuate Silver's Jewishness without saying so directly, why didn't he just pick a photo where we can see it?

Silver has used his ethnicity as a political cudgel before: in 1995 he charged Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno with anti-Semitism. Bruno had called the speaker a "Lower East Side Liberal"—code, Silver maintains, for "Jew."

Silver's most recent baseless charge, like the earlier attack, is pure Sharpton-style demagoguery. But New Yorkers expect racial grandstanding from the reverend; coming from the state's senior elected Democratic official, such rhetoric is more disturbing. Worse, Silver has cried wolf, making people dubious about any future charges of anti-Semitism they may hear.

Did Silver really think New Yorkers would buy it? In Kiev, the city where I was born, ancient and pervasive anti-Semitism made residents specialists in the art of recognizing who is a Jew. Here, most people aren't aware that one can sometimes distinguish Jews through facial features. It's a good thing, and Silver should stop trying to mess it up.

—*E. V. Kontorovich*

Bad Vibrations at New Paltz

By now, the two sex conferences at the State University of New York at New Paltz last November have earned nationwide notoriety. The first, "Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom," included how-to workshops like "Sex Toys for Women" and "Safe, Sane & Consensual S/M: An Alternative Way of Loving." The second, "Subject to Desire: Refiguring the Body," featured such attractions as "Vulva's Morphia," an "installation" by the performance artist Carolee Schneemann, best known for an act in which she slowly unravels a scroll from her vagina and reads aloud from it to the audience.

State officials, from Governor George Pataki on down, expressed outrage when the story broke. John Ryan, SUNY's chancellor, issued a statement in late January describing parts of "Revolting Behavior" as "needlessly offensive to many people," castigating New Paltz president Roger Bowen for bad judgment, and warning that "there is no place on a university campus for displays that are devoid of intellectual, social, or academic merit."

President Bowen angrily responded that he was "shocked

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and dismayed" by the chancellor's statement. And the *New York Times* early on blasted critics of the conferences as "rigid conservatives." "Any university that explores intellectual frontiers," the *Times* sniffed, "will inevitably raise hackles from some part of the political or ideological spectrum."

Right. "Intellectual frontiers" like those explored by the workshop demonstrating the use of vibrators and "anal beads" to students. Or by freely distributed pamphlets like "Safer Sex Handbook for Lesbians," which included, among other delights, a section on "Blood-Letting Sexual Activities." The only "frontiers" explored at New Paltz were the frontiers of perversity.

Predictably, at the first sign of criticism, Bowen and his supporters began bleating about "free speech" and "academic freedom." It is, after all, standard liberal procedure today to use the First Amendment to crush disagreement by brandishing charges of intolerance without engaging the real merits of the question at hand. At a time when being thought "judgmental" terrifies many, such intellectual blackmail has proved enormously effective.

Of course, "Revolting Behavior" had nothing to do with free speech and everything to do with a failure of intellectual leadership. After all, a state-operated university is not the same as an avant-garde performance space in TriBeCa. It is not censorship to refuse to provide a publicly financed showcase for anything the law permits you to say, just as it is not censorship to refuse government subsidies through the NEA to artists specializing in perversity. We have a right to expect that the people we employ as college presidents understand and act upon such

distinctions. College presidents should also understand that the domain of what one has a right to do or say is usually far broader than the range of what one ought to do or say. We rely on manners, morals, and common sense to negotiate the difference. And we rely on our educational institutions—from the family and church to schools and universities—to instill the principles that govern manners and morals. At New Paltz, Bowen failed spectacularly on this score.

I'm not sure which is worse: his initial endorsement of politicized sexual rubbish on campus or his subsequent inability to understand the important moral and intellectual issues at stake. —*Roger Kimball*

Juvenile Justice—Texas Style

Even though violent crime rates keep falling, one group stubbornly resists the trend: juvenile offenders. Blame the juvenile justice system, which by explaining away crime as a by-product of root causes, best dealt with through counseling and social change rather than punishment, gives kids the sense that they can get away with, well, murder. Recently, however, many states—including Texas—have begun to question the received wisdom on teen crime, and the juvenile crime statistics are starting to improve.

According to the Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council, Governor George W. Bush's new juvenile justice laws—featuring longer sentences, more young thugs tried as adults, and a crackdown on teens who commit crimes while on probation—have cut the state's juvenile violent crime rate 12 percent in 1996 from the preceding year. The state's teen population rose 1.4 percent at the same time, making the drop even more significant.

In New York, which lacks a Texas-style policy, juvenile vio-

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lent crime rates show little decline. In contrast to most states, which want to try young thugs as adults more often, New York focuses on discredited and trivial matters. The Assembly's recent juvenile justice bill is a case in point. It pullulates with "legislative findings" that blame crime on underlying forces. The Assembly thinks, for example, that "the ever changing mix of skills required by firms to compete in the global economy yields particular disadvantage to youth that lack the skills or flexibility to learn new skills." So globalization causes youth crime. The Assembly's response? You guessed it: "youth development programs in order to save the next generation"—exactly the kind of programs crime "experts" proposed for decades while crime rates skyrocketed.

The Assembly shouldn't continue 35 years of failed social policy. Instead, it ought to look at a state getting results: in Texas they know that jailed offenders, teens included, don't commit crimes. —*Peter Reinharz*

The New Cosmo Girl

After decades of celebrating the sexual independence of women, even condoning adultery if it satisfied your sexual needs, *Cosmopolitan* magazine—or at least some of its readers—now seems to be shedding the last tattered vestiges of bourgeois propriety. Here are three "Cosmo Confessions" from a recent issue.

Mollie, 24, shares: "I've been sleeping with my sister-in-law, and my husband has no idea that I enjoy her more than I do him. In fact, every time he goes out of town, he says, 'Why don't you call my sister to keep you company?' We've been 'keeping company' for about three years now."

Then Kim, 31, breathlessly reveals: "While my husband was away on business, I indulged in hot, steamy, unprotected sex with his business partner in his private office. It was the most orgasmic experience of my life. Now my husband, who never knew of this affair, has a two-year-old!"

Jennifer, 30, writes: "My boyfriend and I had been fighting, and he wanted me to cook for him. So I did. I put ants in his food and watched him eat it."

Er, maybe it's just me, but doesn't the new Cosmo girl, indulging in everything from bisexual adultery to malevolent pranks, seem less sexually liberated than just plain evil? —*Wendy Shalit*

Green for Greening

The "greening" of New York City would make another fine legacy for the Giuliani administration: a physical transformation as lasting as the bridges, roads, and parks created by Robert Moses. Trees make the city a calmer, less alienating place. Some of the city's dingier thoroughfares cry out for green shade: 14th Street, 8th Street, Houston Street.

Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern supports an "arboreal renaissance," and the mayor himself endorsed the idea in 1996 when he signed the Tree Protection Act into law. (The act increased the penalty for "arboricide" to $15,000 per tree and up to a year in jail.) But budget constraints handicap Stern and his department: the city allocates only $9.7 million for tree planting in 1998, enough for approximately 12,000 new trees. This sounds like a lot, but since more than two-thirds of these new trees die, the city could use at least 8,000 more.

So, sensibly, the city has made it possible for members of the public to have a tree planted on the sidewalk for a contribution of $500. In addition, Trees New York—a private charitable agency—encourages citizens to use this service and teaches them how to maintain the trees, once planted. But their combined efforts haven't been enough to make the city bloom.

If Stern wants to unleash public generosity to make New York greener, he should imitate the money-raising techniques of private citizen groups like the Central Park Conservancy. New York's benefactors like to see their altruism publicly recognized. At present, though, anyone who donates a tree to his block can do so only anonymously. If your horticultural gift brought a little metal plate proclaiming your

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generosity—like those the Conservancy puts on its donated benches—then many more New Yorkers would participate.

People could give trees in the name of others: family members, friends, even beloved pets. If such tree giving were to prove successful, the city could expand the program to allow the public to donate elegant street furniture such as benches, bus shelters, or reproduction Beaux Arts lampposts like those that recently went up on West 90th Street. —*Jonathan Foreman*

"The System Is Crazier Than He Is"

Larry Hogue, the psychiatrically disabled, drug-addicted "Wild Man of West 96th Street," recently disappeared for seven weeks from the halfway house where he'd been living and receiving antipsychotic medication. (He eventually turned up in Connecticut, where a counselor persuaded him to enter voluntarily Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens.) A spokesman for the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene said Hogue, as an outpatient, could choose to stop his treatment at any time.

The residents of West 96th Street are understandably frustrated. For seven years Hogue lived on their street and slept in their doorways. With cocaine addiction fueling his untreated psychosis, and with $3,000 a month from his veteran's pension keeping him afloat, Hogue set fires beneath cars, masturbated in front of children, threatened passersby, and once pushed a schoolgirl into the path of a moving truck. Though the Department of Mental Hygiene hospitalized Hogue more than 30 times, he'd soon be back on the street after each short hospital stay. When Hogue finally entered a long-term treatment program under hospital supervision in 1992, the department promised to notify West 96th Street residents if he ever left. It broke its promise, however, provoking an exasperated Lisa Lehr, a 96th Street leader, to complain, "The system is crazier than he is."

She's right. The system is crazy, for two reasons. First, New York is one of only 13 states without an outpatient commitment law. Under such laws, individuals with schizophrenia or manic-depression who act dangerously must take their prescribed medications. If they don't, they'll quickly find themselves returned to the hospital.

Second, across the country, we still find a refusal to confront the failure of deinstitutionalization. The mentally ill crowd our sidewalks and shelters, our jails and prisons, our public libraries and subways. And they pose a danger to more than themselves: the untreated mentally ill kill nearly 1,000 people in the United States every year.

We'd find a solution faster if we could house Larry Hogue right next to the governor's mansion. Or we could place discharged patients in group homes next door to state legislators or Department of Mental Hygiene officials. Suddenly, we'd see legislatures falling over themselves to pass outpatient commitment laws. The mentally ill would get the treatment they desperately need, and our communities would be that much safer. —*E. Fuller Torrey*

Time Heals All Wounds

It seemed like a good idea. For a magazine to reach the age of 75 is close to miraculous. So when *Time* announced that it was throwing itself a party, playing host to as many of its past cover subjects as possible, readers made ready to raise a glass.

And then came the February night when the *fête* was *accompli*. *Time* rented Radio City Music Hall, and hundreds of well-known faces circulated around the vast arena. Certain incongruities were pleasant: Joe DiMaggio and Henry Kissinger, Mikhail Gorbachev and Sophia Loren, Patricia Nixon Cox and Mel Brooks (never a cover subject, but a funny guy, so what the hell).

But gradually, other, less pleasant, faces appeared: Jack Kevorkian, a.k.a. Doctor Death, and the Rev. Louis Farrakhan, known for leading the Million Man March and calling Judaism a "gutter religion." Still, these newsmakers had been the sub-

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Soundings

jects of recent *Time* articles; why not have them along for the ride? Besides, selected members of the press were in attendance; they would surely give the party lots of ink and air time (and so they did).

But then another face swam up—a face nearly as old as the century. To the general public Leni Riefenstahl, 95, is unfamiliar; Hitler's favorite filmmaker hasn't directed a feature for almost six decades. She's been in denial for the same length of time. Frau Riefenstahl's mendacious memoirs try to explain away her war years, when the Nazis rewarded her with money and honor for her films in what critic George Steiner accurately calls "the official whorehouse of 'Aryan Culture.' "

But her protests of innocence should deceive no one except the willfully ignorant—which is to say, the hosts of the *Time* party. On their next trip to the Beltway, they might stop at the Library of Congress, where they can find an album of photo stills from *Olympia*, Leni's documentary celebrating the 1936 Olympics. It bears Hitler's bookplate and the inscription, "Dedicated to my Führer, with inextinguishable loyalty and deeply felt gratitude." The signature: Leni Riefenstahl.

If simultaneously extending invitations to Riefenstahl and Steven Spielberg, the maker of *Schindler's List*, was thoughtless, inviting her and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, to the same party speaks of a moral abyss so deep you could throw in a copy of *Time* and never hear it hit bottom. *The New Republic* weighed in: "Why Leni Riefenstahl? Perhaps *Time* couldn't locate Martin Bormann's address."

The New Yorker also refused to jump through the hoop. "What was next?" they asked, "Saddam Hussein singing 'Mame'? It was not to be. Saddam, like his fellow cover subject O. J. Simpson, had been deemed 'unlikely to attend' by the editors of *Time* and was not invited." Perhaps the party's hosts had another reason for not requesting

Simpson's presence. When news of the Brentwood killings first broke, his face was on the cover of *Time*, darkened for the occasion. This raised ugly charges of racism, best forgotten at the Music Hall.

So here was the 75th anniversary party's bottom line: to invite the propagandist for the century's most notorious mass murderer is history; to invite the accused killer of two people would be tacky. Speaking of tacky, *The New Republic* mentioned another Time, Inc. publication. It advised readers to "Pity *Time*, which went to all this trouble to prove that it is just the company's beard for *People*."

Talk about Wag the Dog.

—Stefan Kanfer

How to Stop Drunk Driving

In 1996, 17,126 people died on America's roads in alcohol-related accidents. In New York, alcohol plays a role in 34 percent of the city's traffic fatalities. Yet how do we deal with drunk drivers? Prevention is retroactive: stiff financial penalties for drunk drivers take place after a drunk gets caught behind the wheel, or after a crash.

Here's a better way: instead of trying to punish people after they drive drunk, we should encourage them not to do it in the first place, with the help of an innovative device. Called the breathalyzer-activated ignition interlock device, or BAIID for short, it administers a breathalyzer test at the vehicle's point of ignition. Unless the driver passes, his car won't start.

Right now, only repeat drunk drivers ever have to install BAIIDs, but there's a way to

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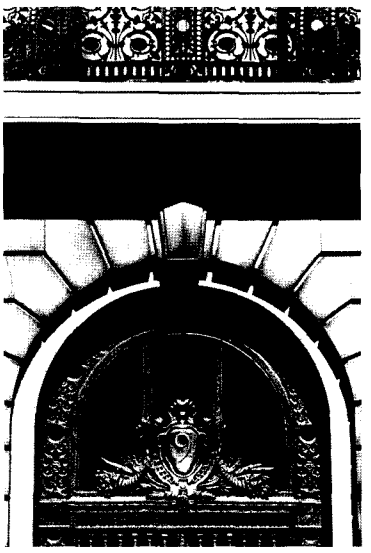
expand the use of the device without upsetting libertarians. If government mandated BAIIDs, drivers would see them as violating their freedom. But the typical car owner would install a BAIID if he'd see a significant decrease in insurance premiums. And he would: by agreeing to equip his car with an interlock device, he removes it from the risk pool that, on some estimates, wreaks a staggering $100 billion in damage annually. Further, insurance companies should extend the same premium breaks to all commercial and municipally operated vehicles that agreed to install BAIIDs.

With fewer traffic deaths, society as a whole benefits, while prudent drivers get a substantial break—all without coercion. What's to lose? —*Harris Silver*

No Bang for the Buck

We've heard the story how many times now? Just give us more money and more teachers and better facilities, the public school teachers' unions plead, and decades of educational failure will turn around. As Congress mulls over a multi-billion-dollar White House proposal to hire 100,000 new teachers, build or repair thousands of schools, and increase spending on other educational programs, it should weigh heavily the results of a major report showing that money has nothing to do with our schools' problems.

Sponsored by the Cato Institute, education writer Paul Ciotti's study takes a hard look at Kansas City's 12-year, court-ordered public school desegregation experiment, which recently ended in humiliating failure. Federal Judge Russell Clark had partially taken over Kansas City's schools in 1985. Just tell me what's necessary for our kids to excel, Clark told the schools, and I'll order taxpayers to pay for it.



Kansas City's schools got what they wanted. In the years that followed, the town spent upwards of $11,700 per pupil, more than any other large district in the country, once we adjust for cost-of-living differences. The city's public schools soon enjoyed fatter teachers' salaries and more teachers—the student-teacher ratio fell to 13 to 1, the lowest of any major district in the U.S. Fifteen new schools went up. Everything the teachers' unions could ever ask for, Judge Clark made taxpayers supply, to the tune of $2 billion over the 12 years.

Did students' test scores improve? Did the gap between white and black test scores close? Did integration increase? Much to the discomfiture of the public schools and Judge Clark, the answers are conclusive: no, no, and no. "The results were dismal," Ciotti sums up. The situation in Kansas City, he adds, is a major setback for supporters of increased public school funding.

And an important new argument for school choice. For if Kansas City shows that throwing money at the public schools does nothing to improve their students' performance, the high achievements of students attending many money-starved inner-city private schools show that success—even without ample funding—is well within reach. How much longer do we have to listen to the public school educrats' tired refrain before we say enough is enough? —*Brian C. Anderson*

Diplomatic Deadbeats

New York City's Family Courts increasingly are clogged with litigation over child support that employees of the United Nations owe but refuse to pay. The flood of cases (I know of at least 50) is recent: until a 1994 change in internal U.N. regulations, a result of

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pressure from desperate mothers, suing a U.N. worker for child support was nearly impossible. In fact, learning how much a U.N. worker gets paid was impossible until 1994, though non-U.N. litigants for child support have long been able to compel disclosure of salary information.

Even so, suing a deadbeat diplomat remains daunting. A litigant can't serve a U.N. employee with court papers at work, since the U.N. has diplomatic immunity from civil process, so a summons server must go to his home. That's if the server can find him: the worker's address is often unknown, since he's concealing his location from a wife or a girlfriend. If he's posted abroad, complex Hague Convention rules make serving him with papers time-consuming. And getting the attention of his boss can take weeks.

Kwadwo Nyamekye offers a representative case. A native of Ghana, Nyamekye is senior consultant to the U.N.'s Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, where he earns a tax-free $150,000 salary. He fathered a son out of wedlock in New York in 1981, yet paid almost nothing to support him until 1996. All the while, he collected big U.N. child-support and education allowances. In Mayor Giuliani's blunt language, this guy's a bum. In January 1995, the mother of Nyamekye's American son, furious at U.N. stonewalling, filed a petition for support in the Family Court. Nyamekye finally agreed to pay $1,000 per month in child support as well as the tuition for the boy's private school.

But Nyamekye didn't pony up. After much hand-wringing, the U.N. told him that unless he submitted to income deduction for the payments, the organization would fire him, though that would be no help to mother and child. Even now, the farce continues: after withholding money from several of Nyamekye's paychecks, the U.N. then spent months dithering over where to send it. To the mother? The court? No one at the U.N. wanted to decide. Finally, the U.N. sent the money to the court.

Why so much trouble in getting a simple court order fulfilled? The U.N. could have followed its staff regulations, which permit family support deductions. But the institutional culture at the U.N. says that, if something needs doing, appoint a committee, or, better yet, many committees, so nothing gets done. As a result, diplomatic deadbeats have little incentive to change their dishonorable ways.

—Suzanne K. Colt

Lost in the Past

While other big-city mayors make striking reforms, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown tenaciously holds onto the past, propping up a bloated city government and handing out favors to municipal unions. An expanding public sector means more union members, after all, and so more Brown voters.

When the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents many city workers, failed to unionize the Visiting Nurse Hospice, a nonprofit city contractor, the SEIU turned to Mayor Brown. The mayor didn't disappoint: he canceled the hospice's contracts—worth over $900,000—and proposed a new city-run home health care agency to offer the same services. Under pressure from the mayor and the union, and despite warnings the city would have to pay as much as 50 percent more for home health care, in early February San Francisco's Board of Supervisors agreed to Brown's proposal.

City workers don't come cheap in San Francisco. Brown has renegotiated almost every city contract, hiking city worker salaries 12.9 percent, while adding almost 1,300 permanent jobs to the city's payroll. The biggest beneficiary of Brown's largesse: the SEIU, whose workers will get an extra $106.2 million over the next three years in their new contract, and who now earn up to 50 percent more than government workers in other California cities. The new contract also blocks the city from contracting out for various services, so privatization will be more difficult, even when Brown goes.

Expanding bureaucracy and letting unions dictate policy to city hall? Maybe somebody better tell Mayor Brown what decade this is. *—Flagg Taylor*

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Why Johnny's Teacher Can't Teach

Heather Mac Donald

Americans' nearly last-place finish in the Third International Mathematics and Sciences Study of student achievement caused widespread consternation this February, except in the one place it should have mattered most: the nation's teacher education schools. Those schools have far more important things to do than worrying about test scores—things like stamping out racism in aspiring teachers. "Let's be honest," darkly commanded Professor Valerie Henning-Piedmont to a lecture hall of education students at Columbia University's Teachers College last February. "What labels do you place on young people based on your biases?" It would be difficult to imagine a less likely group of bigots than these idealistic young people, happily toting around their *Handbooks of Multicultural Education* and their exposés of sexism in the classroom. But Teachers College knows better. It knows that most of its students, by virtue of being white, are complicitous in an unjust power structure.

ALEX WEBB/MAGNUM

The crusade against racism is just the latest irrelevancy to seize the nation's teacher education schools. For over 80 years, teacher education in America has been in the grip of an immutable dogma, responsible for endless educational nonsense. That dogma may be summed up in the phrase: Anything But Knowledge. Schools are about many things, teacher educators say (depending on the decade)—self-actualization, following one's joy, social adjustment, or multicultural sensitivity—but the one thing they are not about is knowledge. Oh sure, educators will occasionally allow the word to pass their lips, but it is always in a compromised position, as in "constructing one's own knowledge," or "contextualized knowledge." Plain old knowledge, the kind passed down in books, the kind for which Faust sold his soul, *that* is out.

Ed schools purvey multicultural sensitivity, metacognition, community-building—anything but knowledge.

The education profession currently stands ready to tighten its already vise-like grip on teacher credentialing, persuading both the federal govern-

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A class at Columbia University's Teachers College

ment and the states to "professionalize" teaching further. In New York, as elsewhere, that means closing off any routes to the classroom that do not pass through an education school. But before caving in to the educrats' pressure, we had better take a hard look at what education schools actually teach.

The course in "Curriculum and Teaching in Elementary Education" that Professor Anne Nelson (a pseudonym) teaches at the City College of New York is a good place to start. Dressed in a tailored brown suit with close-cropped hair, Nelson is a charismatic teacher, with a commanding repertoire of voices and personae. And yet, for all her obvious experience and common sense, her course is a remarkable exercise in vacuousness.

As with most education classes, the title of Professor Nelson's course doesn't give a clear sense of what it is about. Unfortunately, Professor

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Nelson doesn't, either. The semester began, she said in a pre-class interview, by "building a community, rich of talk, in which students look at what they themselves are doing by in-class writing." On this, the third meeting of the semester, Professor Nelson said that she would be "getting the students to develop the subtext of what they're doing." I would soon discover why Professor Nelson was so vague.

"Developing the subtext" turns out to involve a chain reaction of solipsistic moments. After taking attendance and—most admirably—quickly checking the students' weekly handwriting practice, Professor Nelson begins the main work of the day: generating feather-light "texts," both written and oral, for immediate group analysis. She asks the students to write for seven minutes on each of three questions: "What excites me about teaching?" "What concerns me about teaching?" and then, the moment that brands this class as hopelessly steeped in the Anything But Knowledge credo: "What was it like to do this writing?"

This last question triggers a quickening volley of self-reflexive turns. After the students read aloud their predictable reflections on teaching, Professor Nelson asks: "What are you hearing?" A young man states the obvious: "Everyone seems to be reflecting on what their anxieties are." This is too straightforward an answer. Professor Nelson translates into ed-speak: "So writing gave you permission to think on paper about what's there." Ed-speak dresses up the most mundane processes in dramatic terminology—one doesn't just write, one is "given permission to think on the paper"; one doesn't converse, one "negotiates meaning." Then, like a champion tennis player finishing off a set, Nelson reaches for the ultimate level of self-reflexivity and drives it home: "What was it like to listen to each other's responses?"

The self-reflection isn't over yet, however. The class next moves into small groups—along with in-class writing, the most pervasive gimmick in progressive classrooms today—to discuss a set of student-teaching guidelines. After ten minutes, Nelson interrupts the by-now lively and largely off-topic conversations, and asks: "Let's talk about how you felt in these small groups." The students are picking up ed-speak. "It shifted the comfort zone," reveals one. "It was just acceptance; I felt the vibe going through the group." Another adds: "I felt really comfortable; I had trust there." Nelson senses a "teachable moment." "Let's talk about that," she interjects. "We are building trust in this class; we are learning how to work with each other."

Now, let us note what this class was not: it was not about how to keep the attention of eight-year-olds or plan a lesson or make the Pilgrims real to first-graders. It did not, in other words, contain any material (with the exception of the student-teacher guidelines) from the outside world. Instead, it continuously spun its own subject matter out of itself. Like a relationship that consists of obsessively analyzing the relationship, the only content of the course was the course itself.

How did such navel gazing come to be central to teacher education? It is the almost inevitable consequence of the Anything But Knowledge doctrine, born in a burst of quintessentially American anti-intellectual fervor in the wake of World War I. Educators within the federal government and at Columbia's Teachers College issued a clarion call to schools: cast off the traditional academic curriculum and start preparing young people for the demands of modern life. America is a forward-looking country, they boasted; what need have we for such impractical disciplines as Greek, Latin, and higher math? Instead, let the students then flooding the schools take such useful courses as family membership, hygiene, and the worthy use of leisure time. "Life adjustment," not wisdom or learning, was to be the goal of education.

The early decades of this century forged the central educational fallacy of our time: that one can think without having anything to think about. Knowledge is changing too fast to be transmitted usefully to students, argued William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College, the most influential American educator of the century; instead of teaching children dead facts and figures, schools should teach them "critical thinking," he wrote in 1925. What matters is not what you know, but whether you know how to look it up, so that you can be a "lifelong learner."

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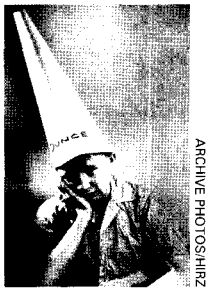
Two final doctrines rounded out the indelible legacy of progressivism. First, Harold Rugg's *The Child-Centered School* (1928) shifted the locus of power in the classroom from the teacher to the student. In a child-centered class, the child determines what he wants to learn. Forcing children into an existing curriculum inhibits their self-actualization, Rugg argued, just as forcing them into neat rows of chairs and desks inhibits their creativity. The teacher becomes an enabler, an advisor; not, heaven forbid, the transmitter of a preexisting body of ideas, texts, or, worst of all, facts. In today's jargon, the child should "construct" his own knowledge rather than passively receive it. By the late 1920s, students were moving their chairs around to form groups of "active learners" pursuing their own individual interests, and, instead of a curriculum, the student-centered classroom followed just one principle: "activity leading to further activity without badness," in Kilpatrick's words. Today's educators still present these seven-decade-old practices as cutting-edge.

As E. D. Hirsch observes, the child-centered doctrine grew out of the romantic idealization of children. If the child was, in Wordsworth's words, a "Mighty Prophet! Seer Blest!" then who needs teachers? But the Mighty Prophet emerged from student-centered schools ever more ignorant and incurious as the schools became more vacuous. By the 1940s and 1950s, schools were offering classes in how to put on nail polish and how to act on a date. The notion that learning should push students out of their narrow world had been lost.

The final cornerstone of progressive theory was the disdain for report cards and objective tests of knowledge. These inhibit authentic learning, Kilpatrick argued; and he carried the day, to the eternal joy of students everywhere.

The foregoing doctrines are complete bunk, but bunk that has survived virtually unchanged to the present. The notion that one can teach "metacognitive" thinking in the abstract is senseless. Students need to learn *something* to learn how to learn at all. The claim that prior knowledge is superfluous because one can always look it up, preferably on the Internet, is equally senseless. Effective research depends on preexisting knowledge. Moreover, if you don't know in what century the atomic bomb was dropped without rushing to an encyclopedia, you cannot fully participate in society. Lastly, Kilpatrick's influential assertion that knowledge was changing too fast to be taught presupposes a blinkered definition of knowledge that excludes the great works and enterprises of the past.



ARCHIVE PHOTOS/HIRZ

Ed-speak dresses up the most mundane processes in dramatic terminology—one doesn't just write, one is "given permission to think on the paper."

The rejection of testing rests on premises as flawed as the push for "critical thinking skills." Progressives argue that if tests exist, then teachers will "teach to the test"—a bad thing, in their view. But why would "teaching to a test" that asked for, say, the causes of the Civil War be bad for students? Additionally, progressives complain that testing provokes rote memorization—again, a bad thing. One of the most tragically influential education professors today, Columbia's Linda Darling-Hammond, director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, an advocacy group for increased teacher "professionalization," gives a telling example of what she considers a criminally bad test in her hackneyed 1997 brief for progressive education, *The Right to Learn*. She points disdainfully to the following question from the 1995 New York State Regents Exam in biology (required for high school graduation) as "a rote recall of isolated facts and vocabulary terms":"The tissue which conducts organic food through a vascular plant is composed of: (1) Cambium cells; (2) Xylem cells; (3) Phloem cells; (4) Epidermal cells."

Only a know-nothing could be offended by so innocent a question. It never occurs to Darling-Hammond that there may be a joy in mastering the parts of a plant or the organelles of a cell, and that such memorization constitutes learning. Moreover, when, in the progressives' view, will a student ever be held accountable for such knowledge? Does

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Darling-Hammond believe that a student can pursue a career in, say, molecular biology or in medicine without it? And how else will that learning be demonstrated, if not in a test? But of course such testing will produce unequal results, and that is the real target of Darling-Hammond's animus.

Once you dismiss real knowledge as the goal of education, you have to find something else to do. That's why the Anything But Knowledge doctrine leads directly to Professor Nelson's odd course. In thousands of education schools across the country, teachers are generating little moments of meaning, which they then subject to instant replay. Educators call this "constructing knowledge," a fatuous label for something that is neither construction nor knowledge but mere game playing. Teacher educators, though, possess a primitive relationship to words. They believe that if they just label something "critical thinking" or "community-building," these activities will magically occur.

For all the ed school talk of freedom from the past, teacher education in this century has been more unchanging than Miss Havisham. Like aging vestal virgins, today's schools lovingly guard the ancient flame of progressivism. Since the 1920s they have not had a single new idea; they have merely gussied up old concepts in new rhetoric, most recently in the jargon of minority empowerment. To enter an education classroom, therefore, is to witness a timeless ritual, embedded in an authority structure of unions and state education departments as rigid as the Vatican.

It is a didactic ritual as well. The education professor's credo is: As I do unto you, so shall you do unto your students. The education professor "models" how she wants her students to teach by her own classroom methods. Such a practice is based on a glaring fallacy—that methods that work passably well with committed 22-year-olds, paying $1,800 a course for your wisdom, will translate seamlessly to a class of seven- or twelve-year-olds.

The Anything But Knowledge credo leaves education professors and their acolytes free to concentrate on far more pressing matters than how to teach the facts of history or the rules of sentence construction. "Community-building" is one of their most urgent concerns. Teacher educators conceive of their classes as sites of profound political engagement, out of which the new egalitarian order will emerge. A case in point is Columbia's required class, "Teaching English in Diverse Social and Cultural Contexts," taught by Professor Barbara Tenney (a pseudonym). "I want to work at a very conscious level with you to build community in this class," Tenney tells her attentive students on the first day of the semester this spring. "You can do it consciously, and you ought to do it in your own classes." Community-building starts by making nameplates for our desks. Then we all find a partner to interview about each other's "identity." Over the course of the semester, each student will conduct two more "identity" interviews with different partners. After the interview, the inevitable self-reflexive moment arrives, when Tenney asks: "How did it work?" This is a sign that we are on our way to "constructing knowledge."

A hallmark of community-building is its overheated rhetoric. The education professor acts as if she were facing a pack of snarling Serbs and Croats, rather than a bunch of well-mannered young ladies (the vast majority of education students), hoping for a good grade. So the community-building assignments attack nonexistent problems of conflict. Tenney, sporting a black leather miniskirt and a cascade of blond curls, hands out a sheet of paper and asks us to respond to the questions: "What climate would allow you to do your best work? How should a class act to encourage open and honest and critical dialogue?" We write for a while, then read our response to our interview partner.

Now is this question really necessary, especially for a group of college graduates? Good classroom etiquette is hardly a mystery. In the evil traditional classroom, and probably also at Teachers College, if a student calls another a fathead, thus discouraging "open and honest and critical dialogue," the teacher would simply reprimand him, and everyone would understand perfectly well what just happened and why. Consensus already exists on civil behavior. But the education classroom, lacking a pressing agenda in concrete knowledge, has to "problematize" the most automatic social routines.

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Of course, no amount of writing about the conditions for "open dialogue" can change the fact that discussion is not open on many issues at Teachers College and other progressive bastions. "If you don't demonstrate the correct point of view," says a student, "people are hostile. There's a herd mentality here." A former student of Tenney's describes the difficulties of dissent from the party line on racism: "There's nothing to be gained from challenging it. If you deny that the system inherently privileges whites, you're 'not taking responsibility for your position in racism.'" Doubtless, it would never occur to Professor Tenney that the problem this student describes impedes community-building.

All this artificial "community-building," however gratifying to the professors, has nothing to do with learning. Learning is ultimately a solitary activity: we have only one brain, and at some point we must exercise it in private. One could learn an immense amount about Schubert's lieder or calculus without ever knowing the name of one's seatmate. Such a view is heresy to the education establishment, determined, as Rita Kramer has noted, to eradicate any opportunity for individual accomplishment, with its sinister risk of superior achievement. For the educrats, the group is the irreducible unit of learning. Fueling this principle is the gap in achievement between whites and Asians, on the one hand, and other minorities on the other. Unwilling to adopt the discipline and teaching practices that would help reduce that gap, the education establishment tries to conceal it under group projects.

And so the ultimate community-building mechanism is the ubiquitous "collaborative group." No activity is too solitary to escape assignment to a group: writing, reading, researching, thinking—all are better done with many partners, according to educational dogma. If you see an ed school class sitting up in straight rows, call a doctor, because it means the professor has had a heart attack and couldn't arrange the class into groups.

For all their "progressive" sympathies, not all ed students like this regime. "I'm a socialist at heart," says one of Tenney's students, establishing her bona fides, "but some tasks, like writing, are not collaborative. It's hard when someone loses their voice." Another Columbia student in the Education Administration program complains that "teachers here let the group projects run wild." At $1,800 a course, it's frustrating "when the last four sessions of a class are group projects that are all garbage." Lastly, small group discussions have a habit of careening off the assigned topic. The professors rarely intervene, however, says a Teachers College student, "because they don't want to interfere with the interaction."

"If you don't demonstrate the correct point of view," says a student, "people are hostile. There's a herd mentality here."

The elevation of the group entails the demotion of teachers—yet another plank in the Anything But Knowledge platform. To accord teachers any superior role in the classroom would be to acknowledge an elite hierarchy of knowledge, possessed by some but not all, at least without effort. Teachers traditionally represent elitism, learning, authority—everything that progressivism scorns—and so they must be relegated to the role of mere facilitators for the all-important group.

Linda Darling-Hammond's description of collaborative learning perfectly captures how inextricable the political is from the educational in progressive theory. "Whereas traditional classrooms tend to be still but for the sound of teacher talking, learning-centered classrooms feature student talk and collective action." (The "learning-centered classroom" is Darling-Hammond's jargon for a student-centered classroom.) "Collective action"—how exciting! But though lots of undirected "student talk" hardly seems conducive to learning, progressives abhor quiet. David Schaafsma, one of Columbia's more politicized teachers, told his English Methods class of visiting a quiet third-grade class in the Bronx, explaining: "It terrifies me when kids are really really still. They've got to move." It never occurs to these apostles of the Free Self that for many inner-city children, reaching a state of calm attention is a wonderful achievement.

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Collaborative learning leads naturally to another tic of the progressive classroom: "brainstorming." Rather than lecture to a class, the teacher asks the class its opinion about something and lists the responses on the blackboard. Nothing much happens after that; brainstorming, like various forms of community-building, appears to be an end in itself. Hunter College professor Faith DiCaprio (a pseudonym) recently used two levels of brainstorming—whole group and small group—with her "Language and Literacy in Early Childhood" class. The class had just read *Wally's Stories* by Vivian Paley, essentially a transcript of freewheeling discussions among kindergartners in a progressive classroom. First, DiCaprio asked her students what they liked about the book. As students called out their responses—"I liked how she didn't correct the students," "She reminded us why a child-centered room is so necessary: she didn't intrude on their conversation"—DiCaprio writes their responses in abbreviated ed-speak on big posted sheets of paper: "Tolerance: they negotiated meaning" and "Created safe arena."

After DiCaprio fills up the posted pages, nothing happens. Nothing needs to happen, for the lists of responses are visible proof of how much the class already knows. We have just "constructed knowledge." On to the next brainstorming exercise. This time, it's a twofer—brainstorming plus collaborative learning. DiCaprio breaks the class into small groups. Their assignment: list and categorize the topics discussed by the kindergartners in *Wally's Stories*. So the students dutifully make lists of fairies, food, plants, witches, and other meaty matters. One outspoken girl enthuses to her group: "And the kids were smart, they were like, 'The turnips push up with the roots,' and I was like, 'How'd they know that?'" After the groups complete their lists, they read them to the rest of the class. Learning tally? Almost zero.

The consequences of the Anything But Knowledge credo for intellectual standards have been dire. Education professors are remarkably casual when it comes to determining whether their students actually know anything, rarely asking them, for example, what can you tell us about the American Revolution? The ed schools incorrectly presume that the students will have learned everything they need to know in their other or previous college courses, and that the teacher certification exams will screen out people who didn't.

Even if college education were reliably rigorous and comprehensive, education majors aren't the students most likely to profit from it. Nationally, undergraduate education majors have lower SAT and ACT scores than students in any other pro-

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Future teachers get in the swing of music from many lands at Teachers College.

gram of study Only 16 percent of education majors scored in the top quartile of 1992–93 graduates, compared with 33 percent of humanities majors Education majors were overrepresented in the bottom quartile, at 30 percent. In New York City, many education majors have an uncertain command of English—I saw one education student at City College repeatedly write "choce" for "choice"—and appear altogether ill at ease in a classroom To presume *anything* about this population without a rigorous content exit exam is unwarranted.

The laissez-faire attitude toward student knowledge rests on "principled" grounds, as well as on see-no-evil inertia. Many education professors embrace the facile post-structuralist view that knowledge is always political. "An education program can't have content [knowledge] specifics," explains Migdalia Romero, chair of Hunter College's Department of Curriculum and

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Teaching, "because then you have a point of view. Once you define exactly what finite knowledge is, it becomes a perspective." The notion that a culture could possess a pre-political common store of texts and ideas is anathema to the modern academic.

The most powerful dodge regurgitates William Heard Kilpatrick's classic "critical thinking" scam. Asked whether a future teacher should know the date of the 1812 war, Professor Romero replied: "Teaching and learning is not about dates, facts, and figures, but about developing critical thinking." When pressed if there were not *some* core facts that a teacher or student should know, she valiantly held her ground. "There are two ways of looking at teaching and learning," she replied. "Either you are imparting knowledge, giving an absolute knowledge base, or teaching and learning is about dialogue, a dialogue that helps to internalize and to raise questions." Though she offered the disclaimer "of course you need both," Romero added that teachers don't have to know everything, because they can always look things up.

Romero's tolerance of potential teacher ignorance perfectly reflects New York State's official policy on learning, a sellout to progressivism in its preference for "concepts" and "critical thinking" over measurable knowledge. The Regents' much-vaunted 1996 "student learning standards" are vacuous evasions of facts and knowledge, containing not a single book or document or historical fact that students should know. Literature? The word isn't mentioned. Instead, proclaim the standards in classic educationese, "students will listen, speak, read, and write for literary response and expression"—literally a meaningless statement, matched in its meaninglessness only by the next "English Language Arts" standard: "Students will listen, speak, read, and write for social interaction." Teachers need to get hold of the third level of documentation accompanying the standards to find any specific historical figures or events or books, but there, excessive detail and gaseous generalization will overwhelm them.

But what New York State expects of its students is a model of rigor compared to what it formally expects of its teachers. The State Teacher Certification Exams are a complete abdication of the state's responsibility for ensuring an educated teaching force. If any teachers in the state know anything about American history, English literature, or chemistry, it is a complete accident, for the state's highest education authorities have not the slightest interest in finding out. The Liberal Arts and Sciences Test, the ticket to a teacher's first five years in a classroom, contains absolutely no substance; at most, it tests reading skills. The test preparation booklet is a classic of educationese. The exam section on "Historical and Social Scientific Awareness" (note: not "knowledge"), for example, tests teachers' "understanding [of] the interrelatedness of historical, geographic, cultural, economic, political and social issues and factors."

Now, by loading on the different types of "issues and factors" that prospective teachers are supposed to understand, the exam ensures that they need know nothing in particular. The only thing that test takers do have to know is the multicultural dogma that there is no history, only "multiple perspectives" on history. The certification exam asks prospective teachers to "analyze multiple perspectives within U.S. society regarding major historical and contemporary issues"—*not* history, but "historical *issues*," and not even "historical issues," but "multiple perspectives" on "historical issues." Such a demand is ripe for spouting off, say, on the "Native American perspective" on the Western expansion, without having the slightest idea what fueled that expansion, when and where it occurred, who peopled it, and what its consequences were. In fairness, the Content Specialty Tests teachers must take for permanent certification are much more substantive, especially in science and math, but only one-third of the teachers seeking provisional certification ever make it that far.

The pedagogy portion of the Liberal Arts and Sciences certification exam resembles a catechism more than an exam. "Multiple perspectives" are clearly not acceptable in answering such loaded questions as: "Analyze how classroom environments that respect diversity foster positive student experiences," or, "Analyze how schoolwide structures (i.e., tracking) and classroom factors (e.g., homogeneous versus heterogeneous grouping

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[presumably by ability], student-teacher interactions) may affect students' self-concepts and learning." Will a would-be teacher who answers that classrooms should stress a common culture or that ability-grouping promotes excellence remain just a would-be teacher? One hopes not.

The exams echo with characteristic ed school verbiage. The student doesn't learn, he achieves "learning processes and outcomes"; the teacher doesn't teach, she "applies strategies for facilitating learning in instructional situations." Disregard for language runs deep in the teacher education profession, so much so that ed school professors tolerate glaring language deficiencies in schoolchildren. Last January, Manhattan's Park West High School shut down for a day, so that its faculty could bone up on progressive pedagogy. One of the more popular staff development seminars was "Using Journals and Learning Logs." The presenters—two Park West teachers and a representative from the New York City Writing Project, an anti-grammar initiative run by Lehman College's Education School—proudly passed around their students' journal writing, including the following representative entry on "Matriarchys v. pratiarchys [sic]": "The different between Matriarchys and patriarchys is that when the mother is in charge of the house. sometime the children do whatever they want. But sometimes the mother can do both roll as a mother and as a father too and they can do it very good." A more personal entry described how the author met her boyfriend: "He said you are so kind I said you noticed and then he hit me on my head. I madebelieve I was crying and when he came naire me I slaped him right in his head and than I ran . . . to my grandparients home and he was right behind me. Thats when he asked did I have a boyfriend."

The ubiquitous journal-writing cult holds that such writing should go uncorrected. Fortunately, some Park West teachers bridled at the notion. "At some point, the students go into the job market, and they're not being judged 'holistically,'" protested a black teacher, responding to the invocation of the state's "holistic" model for grading writing. Another teacher bemoaned the Board of Ed's failure to provide guidance on teaching grammar.

"I'm not going to spend my life doing error diagnosis! I'm not going to spend my weekend on that!"

"My kids are graduating without skills," he lamented.

Such views, however, were decidedly in the minority. "Grammar is related to purpose," soothed the Lehman College representative, educrat code for the proposition that asking students to write grammatically on topics they are not personally "invested in" is unrealistic. A Park West presenter burst out with a more direct explanation for his chilling indifference to student incompetence: "I'm not going to spend my life doing error diagnosis! I'm not going to spend my weekend on that!" Correcting papers used to be part of the necessary drudgery of a teacher's job. No more, with the advent of enlightened views about "self-expression" and "writing with intentionality."

However easygoing the education establishment is regarding future teachers' knowledge of history, literature, and science, there is one topic that it assiduously monitors: their awareness of racism. To many teacher educators, such an awareness is the most important tool a young teacher can bring to the classroom. It cannot be developed too early. Rosa, a bouncy and enthusiastic junior at Hunter College, has completed only her first semester of education courses, but already she has mastered the most important lesson: America is a racist, imperialist country, most like, say, Nazi Germany. "We are lied to by the very institutions we have come to trust," she recalls from her first-semester reading. "It's all government that's inventing these lies, such as Western heritage."

The source of Rosa's newfound wisdom, Donaldo Macedo's *Literacies of Power: What Americans Are Not Allowed to Know*, is an execrable book by any measure. But given its target audience—impressionable education students—it comes close to being a crime. Widely assigned at Hunter, and in use in approximately 150 education schools nationally, it

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is an illiterate, barbarically ignorant Marxist-inspired screed against America. Macedo opens his first chapter, "Literacy for Stupidification: The Pedagogy of Big Lies," with a quote from Hitler and quickly segues to Ronald Reagan: "While busily calling out slogans from their patriotic vocabulary memory warehouse, these same Americans dutifully vote . . . for Ronald Reagan, giving him a landslide victory . . . . These same voters ascended [sic] to Bush's morally high-minded call to apply international laws against Saddam Hussein's tyranny and his invasion of Kuwait." Standing against this wave of ignorance and imperialism is a lone 12-year-old from Boston, whom Macedo celebrates for his courageous refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

What does any of this have to do with teaching? Everything, it turns out. In the 1960s, educational progressivism took on an explicitly political cast: schools were to fight institutional racism and redistribute power. Today, Columbia's Teachers College holds workshops on cultural and political "oppression," in which students role-play ways to "usurp the existing power structure," and the New York State Regents happily call teachers the "ultimate change agents." To be a change agent, one must first learn to "critique" the existing social structure. Hence, the assignment of such propaganda as Macedo's book.

But however bad the influence of Macedo's puerile politics on future teachers, it pales compared to the model set by his writing style. A typical sentence: "This inability to link the reading of the word with the world, if not combated, will further exacerbate already feeble democratic institutions [sic] and the unjust, asymmetrical power relations that characterize the hypocritical nature of contemporary democracies." Anyone who dares criticize Macedo for his prose is merely trying to "suffocate discourses," he says, with the "blind and facile call for clarity." That Hunter College could assign this gross betrayal of the English language to future teachers is a sufficient reason for closing its education program down. Rosa's control of English is shaky enough as it is; to fill her ears with such subliterate writing represents professional malpractice.

But Macedo is just one of the political tracts that Hunter force-fed the innocent Rosa in her first semester. She also learned about the evils of traditional children's stories from education radical Herbert Kohl. In *Should We Burn Babar?* Kohl weighs the case for and against the dearly beloved children's classic, *Babar the Elephant*, noting in passing that it prevented him from "question[ing] the patriarchy earlier." He decides—but let Rosa expound the message of Kohl's book: "[*Babar*]'s like a children's book, right? [But] there's an underlying meaning about colonialism, about like colonialism, and is it OK, it's really like it's OK, but it's like really offensive to these people." Better burn Babar now!

In New York, as in almost every state, the focus on diversity and anti-racism indoctrination comes with the highest imprimatur. The State Board of Regents requires all prospective teachers to have at least one course in "diversity"; many local ed schools pride themselves on weaving "diversity" into all their courses. The nation's most influential education school, Teachers College, promotes the most extreme race consciousness in its mandated diversity program. In her large lecture course, Professor Valerie Henning-Piedmont sneered at "liberal correctness," which she defined as "I don't see the color of my students." Such misguided color blindness, she said, equals: "I don't see the students."

Expect the folly only to grow worse. A draft report from the Regents Task Force on Teaching, grousing that future teachers lack sufficient grounding in diversity, calls for special training in such challenges as "teaching both sexes," thus further legitimizing the ludicrous proposition that schools mistreat girls. The Regents also make recruiting a more "diverse" teaching force a top priority, based on the assumption that minority students learn best from minority teachers. Currently, 34 percent of teachers in New York City, and 15 percent statewide, are minorities, compared to a student population that is 83 percent minority in New York City and 43 percent statewide. Asked what evidence the Regents have for the proposition that the color of the teaching force correlates with achievement, Doris T. Garner, staff coordinator for the Task Force, admitted, "I don't think hard evidence exists that would say that." If black students should be taught by black teachers, should white students be

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taught by white teachers? "I would not recommend that," replied Garner, fearless of illogic.

Since the Regents are making teacher diversity a top priority, something is going to have to give. Currently, blacks fail the content-free Liberal Arts and Sciences Test of provisional certification at a rate five times that of whites. But that's just a temporary obstacle, because the test-bias hounds may be already closing in for the kill: the discovery that the exam discriminates against minorities. The Regents' most recent paper on teacher training warned that the certification exam "must exclude language that would jeopardize candidates, and include language and content that reflects diversity." Now, the only candidates who would be jeopardized by the exam's language are those, of any color, who are deeply troubled by hot air. As for "cultural bias," at present the exam is a rainbow of multicultural examples and propaganda—one sample question, for example, features a fawning review of a "multicultural dance work that is truly representative of the diversity of New York." Don't be surprised if the complete absence of any "bias" in the exam, however, fails to prevent a concerted, taxpayer-funded effort to redraft it so as to guarantee an equal pass rate among all groups of takers.

Though the current diversity battle cry is "All students can learn," the educationists continually lower expectations of what they should learn. No longer are students expected to learn all their multiplication tables in the third grade, as has been traditional. But while American educators come up with various theories about fixed cognitive phases to explain why our children should go slow, other nationalities trounce us. Sometimes, we're trounced in our own backyards, causing cognitive dissonance in local teachers.

A young student at Teachers College named Susan describes incredulously a Korean-run preschool in Queens. To her horror, the school, the Holy Mountain School, violates every progressive tenet: rather than being "student-centered" and allowing each child to do whatever he chooses, the school imposes a curriculum on the children, based on the alphabet. "Each week, the children got a different letter," Susan recalls grimly. Such

Columbia's Teachers College holds workshops on cultural and political "oppression," in which students role-play ways to "usurp the existing power structure."

an approach violates "whole language" doctrine, which holds that students can't "grasp the [alphabetic] symbols without the whole word or the meaning or any context in their lives," in Susan's words. Holy Mountain's further infractions include teaching its wildly international students only in English and failing to provide an "anti-bias multicultural curriculum." The result? By the end of preschool the students learn English and are writing words. Here is true belief in the ability of all children to learn, for it is backed up by action.

Across the city, young teachers are dumping progressive theories faster than Indonesian currency. For all the unctuous talk of diversity, many progressive tenets are dangerously ill adapted to inner-city classrooms. "They don't say 'boo' about this population," scoffs Samantha, a recent Hunter graduate now teaching in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section. "My course in multiculturalism had zero to do with the classroom."

A former dancer, Samantha was an open receptacle for progressive ideas. But her early efforts to follow the model have left her stranded. Her fourth-grade class is out of control. "I didn't set it up in a strict manner at the beginning," she laments. "I gave them too many choices; I did a lot of things wrong." Collaborative learning? Forget about it. "My kids resort to fighting immediately if I put them in groups." Samantha tried to use groups to make a poster on electricity. "It was mayhem; they couldn't stay quiet," she recalls.

The student-centered classroom is equally a fraud. "You can't give them choices," Samantha asserts flatly. Next year, with a new class, she will do things differently. "I will have everything set up to the last detail—their names on the desks, which notebooks

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to buy, how to label them. They need to know what hook to hang their coat on and where to go from there. Every minute of the day has to be scripted. You can't just say: 'Line up!' because they'll fight. Instead, you have to say: 'Boys, stand up, push in your chairs, and here are your line spots.'"

As for "metacognition," that is out as well. "My kids need the rote; they can't do half of six or four divided by two." Samantha is using the most unholy of unholies to teach her children to read—a basal reader, derided by the education establishment as spirit-killing. But the reader gives her specific skill sets to work on—above all, phonics and grammar. "My kids don't hear the correct sound of words at home, such as 'th' or the ending of words, so teaching reading is harder."

Journals, whole language, and "portfolio assessment" became more casualties of the real world at the Holy Cross School in the Bronx. The school recently hired a Teachers College graduate who arrived fired up with those student-centered methods. No more. Now she is working very hard on grammar, according to assistant principal William Kurtz. "Those [progressive] tools don't necessarily work for kids who can't read or tell you what a noun or a verb is," he says. In his own history class, Kurtz has discovered that he needs to be as explicit about study habits and research methods as Samantha is about classroom behavior. "When I give an essay question, I have to be very structured about going to the library and what resources to use. If you don't do that, they look up nothing."

The education establishment would be unfazed by these stories. Samantha and William, it would say, are still prisoners of the "deficit model." All these two benighted teachers can see is what their kids don't know, instead of building on their strengths. If those strengths are hip-hop music, for example, focus on that. But for heaven's sake, don't deny the children the benefits of a child-centered classroom.

In fact, the strict environment that Samantha plans is the best thing that could happen to her pupils. It is perhaps the only place they will meet order and civility. Samantha's children are "surrounded by violence," she says. Many are not interested in learning, because at home, "everyone is dissing everybody, or staying up late to get high. My kids are so emotionally beat up, they don't even know when they're out of their seats." A structured classroom is their only hope to learn the rules that the rest of society lives by. To eliminate structure for kids who have none in their lives is to guarantee failure.

Given progressive education's dismal record, all New Yorkers should tremble at what the Regents have in store for the state. The state's teacher education establishment, led by Columbia's Linda Darling-Hammond, has persuaded the Regents to make its monopoly on teacher credentialing total. Starting in 2003, according to a Regents plan steaming inexorably toward adoption, all teacher candidates must pass through an education school to be admitted to a classroom. We know, alas, what will happen to them there.

This power grab will be a disaster for children. By making ed school inescapable, the Regents will drive away every last educated adult who may not be willing to sit still for its foolishness but who could bring to the classroom unusual knowledge or experience. The nation's elite private schools are full of such people, and parents eagerly proffer tens of thousands of dollars to give their children the benefit of such skill and wisdom.

Amazingly, even the Regents, among the nation's most addled education bodies, sporadically acknowledge what works in the classroom. A Task Force on Teaching paper cites some of the factors that allow other countries to wallop us routinely in international tests: a high amount of lesson content (in other words, teacher-centered, not student-centered, learning), individual tracking of students, and a coherent curriculum. The state should cling steadfastly to its momentary insight, at odds with its usual policies, and discard its foolhardy plan to enshrine Anything But Knowledge as its sole education dogma. Instead of permanently establishing the teacher education status quo, it should search tirelessly for alternatives and for potential teachers with a firm grasp of subject matter and basic skills. Otherwise ed school claptrap will continue to stunt the intellectual growth of the Empire State's children. ●

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Why New York Can't Build Schools

E. V. Kontorovich

New York City spends $1 billion a year trying to get schools built and repaired, with little result. Reason: the School Construction Authority can't do the job. Time to privatize.

New York City's schools are in a crazy catch-22. Here they are, bursting at the seams and crumbling down around pupils' ears: photos of debris-strewn classrooms and teachers lecturing to kids in converted bathrooms fill the papers every week. And yet, despite ample funds, the Board of Education can't get schools built or fixed. While some trace the problem back to the city's 1975 fiscal crisis, 23 years later the city enjoys a budget surplus and spends close to $1 billion yearly to build and repair its schools, so that excuse rings false. What's going on?

There's a culprit for the city's ongoing failure: the New York City School Construction Authority. The legislature created the SCA in 1988 to assume the duties of the Board of Ed's Division of School Facilities, which had completely failed in its mission of building high-quality schools efficiently and fixing them when they needed repair. Ten years later, it's clear that the SCA has been a disaster, too. While the authority improved slightly on the board's track record, that's faint praise, since the board needed *eight to ten years* to build a school, and organized crime dominated its construction projects. An agency as well funded as the SCA—it has already spent $6.4 billion and will spend another $1.1 billion this year—should have a lot to show for itself, and it doesn't. By any performance measure—the number of schools built, the cost and quality of construction, timeliness in opening—the SCA flunks.

From the outset, the SCA couldn't do anything right: its first five-year plan gave it $4.3 billion to build more than 50 schools, but nearing the end of its *second* five-year plan, it has built only 48. It is invariably late with new schools, three-year delays being routine, and repairs never seem to get done. "I spent the summer of 1996 screaming because the SCA was delivering unfinished buildings," says Harry Spence, an SCA trustee and Deputy Schools Chancellor for Operations. Brooklyn's P.S. 22 is sadly typical. Having an initial completion date of March 1993, the school finally opened in September 1996, though no one could get the agency to explain the three year lag. To turn from the typical to the extreme: the authority won't complete its reconstruction of Brooklyn's historic Erasmus Hall High School until 1999, six years late and $70 million over budget. "I was very distressed by

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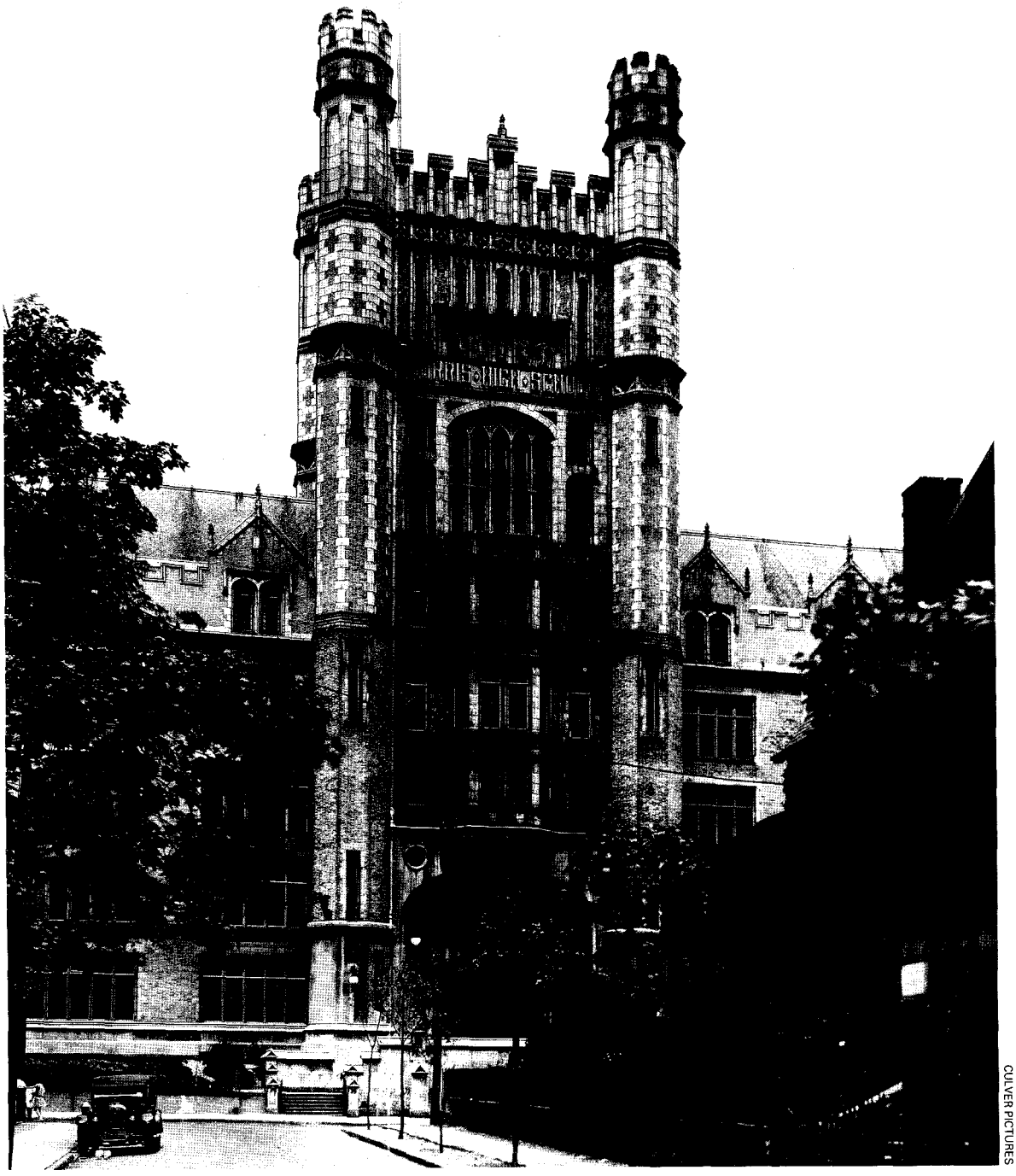

CULVER PICTURES

New York once built grand schools, such as Morris High School in the Bronx, . . .

the laissez-faire approach to schedules and lack of concern about timeliness," Spence adds, with some understatement.

As for the schools that do get built, cracked floors, slanted walls, and temperamental heating are common. P.S. 20 in Queens promptly sank into the landfill the SCA built it on, delaying its opening three years; P.S. 43—the infamous floating school—flooded with 400,000 gallons of seawater. Repairs don't go any better: in 1996, investigators found that a majority of recently renovated schools suffered serious flaws. In Manhattan's P.S. 158, SCA "repairs" left behind broken intercoms, a new air-conditioning system that refused to work, and floors with missing tiles. In George Washington High School, a leaky ceiling has collapsed three times over the past four years.

The SCA has also ignored one of the big problems it was created to solve. When the agency took over from the Board of Education, the public was

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angry that ancient, manually stoked coal furnaces still provided heat for one of every three city schools. Years later, coal trucks continue to rumble up to more than 250 of the city's 1,100 schools, as worried parents discovered last February when more than 70 students succumbed to anthracite vapors leaking from an open coal furnace at P.S. 127.

In January, a horrible accident threw the agency's failures into sharp relief, when falling bricks from an SCA construction project at P.S. 131 in Borough Park killed 16-year-old Yan Zhen Zhao and seriously injured ten-year-old Barbara Drozdics. The tragedy didn't surprise SCA watchers: a mayoral report two years ago grimly concluded: "Falling bricks are a system-wide problem." But that makes falling bricks sound like corroding pipes, an unfortunate, but natural, phenomenon. In fact, Espo Contractors, hired by the SCA to repair the school's roof, *intentionally* used bricks to hold down a tarpaulin, despite strong warnings from safety experts. And on a large-scale construction site like this one, sidewalk sheds should protect passersby, as an SCA inspector told Espo months before the accident, to no avail. Zhao's death resulted from the "laziness and not paying attention" of SCA inspectors and project managers, according to Richard Sklar, whose construction firm, O'Brien and Kritzberg, helped organize the authority and served as its official inspectors until 1996. "It's pure carelessness—some guy ought to be hung," he says angrily. (A grand jury has just charged Espo and one of its supervisors with manslaughter.)

Several outside inspectors have taken the SCA to task for lax safety, but the authority invariably shrugs off such criticism. A 1994 study by the Senate Committee on Investigations deemed the authority's projects "unsafe," and a mayoral commission warned in 1996 that "imminent calamity is at our door." Yet the SCA flatly denies the charges, or, on the rare occasions when it admits a mistake, claims to have addressed it promptly. But auditors question those claims—with good reason. Most recently, inspecting 150 work sites after the P.S. 131 accident, safety inspectors discovered 38 violations at 29 of them, including nine where contractors did exterior work without sidewalk sheds.

To understand what's wrong with the SCA—and how New York can get high-quality schools built—go back for a moment to the authority's hope-filled birth in 1988. Schools that were monuments of civic confidence and shrines to learning—Erasmus Hall in Brooklyn, say, whose grand Gothic quadrangle opened in 1896, or Manhattan's Wadleigh High School, with its magnificent bell tower and ornately molded cornices—had long since fallen into disrepair, their grandeur as forgotten as separate entrances for boys and girls. The Board of Ed's Division of School Facilities drew fire for what the legislature called "the deplorable condition" of city schools. And the legislature was right: the board's lack of accountability, complex collective-bargaining agreements, and imprisonment in a straitjacket of laws governing public authorities—laws that controlled every aspect of contracting—made the division a complete bust at building and maintaining city schools.

The solution, the legislature reasoned, was to form a new agency, free from the shackles that hampered its predecessor. A little tinkering with the public authorities laws plus better management and—*voilà!*—you'd have an efficient, independent authority, with hardworking, accountable employees. Or so people thought. "Now, provided with first-class leadership, it has the powers to press school construction projects to prompt completion," raved Assemblyman Mark Allen Siegel in a *New York Times* op-ed in the SCA's first months. We'd expect such unmeasured enthusiasm from Siegel, one of the SCA's co-sponsors. But even Senator Roy Goodman, later one of the authority's most indefatigable foes, fell under its spell, exclaiming that the SCA charter was "the most important single bill I've had the pleasure of being associated with in my 20 years in government."

But from the beginning, the transfer of responsibility for school construction from the Board of Ed to the authority was a distinction without a difference. The SCA legislation addressed none of the weaknesses of public development. The authority was new in name only.

When legislators created the SCA, they claimed the Wicks Law wouldn't apply to it, and even

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today SCA defenders say the agency escapes its provisions. Wicks, a 77-year-old piece of legislation originally designed to fight cronyism in the awarding of public construction contracts but now kept alive because it is a union gravy train, requires public agencies to award four *separate* contracts: to the plumbers; the electricians; the heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning contractors; and the construction firm that will actually put up the roof and walls—for every project costing more than $50,000. The agency becomes the general contractor, responsible for coordinating the work of the subcontractors.

Wicks increases public construction expenses by some 30 percent, because of the inefficiencies it creates. When a private-sector general contractor oversees a project, he forces the subcontractors to make the lowest possible bid, he disciplines them, he browbeats them to do the project on time and to coordinate their work with one another. He decides how to put together its various parts most efficiently—and might do a lot of the work himself. "Every company makes its own rules," says Dale Hemmerdinger, president of ATCO Properties and Management. "If it has a good electrician on the payroll, the general contractor will handle electrical work in-house. Otherwise it can subcontract work out." Not only does flexibility lead to greater efficiency; it helps keep union demands in check. If a union drives too hard a bargain, most general contractors will just say, take a hike—we'll do it ourselves. Since public agencies make remarkably poor general contractors, the four separate union subcontractors can usually get away with murder.

No matter how SCA employees perform, it is exceedingly difficult to reward them for excellence or fire them for shirking.

By the late eighties, despite vigorous union support for the Wicks Law, the legislature had grown aware of its pernicious effects, which cost the state an estimated $500 million a year. Often, public works would suffer interminable delays as site managers waited for an authority-contracted plumber or electrician to show up. "Wicks has increased construction costs and delays as city officials, supervising plumbers' and electricians' schedules, try to keep the contracting jigsaw puzzle together," complained Assemblyman Siegel in 1988. "[It] remains the only obstacle to repairing the city's crumbling schools."

Excitement soared when the SCA charter exempted the agency from Wicks. But the unions had fought hard to keep their Wicks privileges, and they laughed last. When scrutinized, the fine print of the SCA charter revealed that, while the SCA could now hire a general contractor, that contractor still had to award at least three separate subcontracts to the various trades. All the exemption achieved was to move inefficiency from the authority to the general contractor it hired. But the trick worked: years later, newspapers still refer to the SCA's "Wicks exemption."

> Predictably, coordination problems—plastering done before roof repairs, a computer lab sitting idle for months because a security system still hadn't been installed—plague SCA projects and make costs balloon.

The Public Authorities Law compounds the problem further. The law stipulates that the SCA, to avoid corruption, must award, with few exceptions, contracts to the lowest bidder, unless that bidder has connections with organized crime. But this seemingly sensible requirement makes less sense when looked at more closely. The lowest bidder doesn't always end up doing the work as cheaply as he promised, or else he may do a shoddy job, as private contractors well know. Private contractors, who know the reputations of various subcontractors and know which will do good work for the right price, can reward good work with more business or refuse to use a poor subcontractor again. With public bids, though, an agency has almost no discretion over its next contract. Even if a contractor let it down before, the agency must prove it did *such* a bad job that it should be excluded from future bids, a time-consuming and often fruitless task.

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The Public Authorities Law further hinders the SCA by demanding that it maintain a separate office to funnel subcontracting work to "Locally Based Enterprises" and "Minority/Women-Based Enterprises." And as further protection for unions, the law forces the SCA to ensure that subcontractors pay prevailing union wages, so that nonunion outfits can't underbid union subcontractors, and it obligates the agency to steer business to firms that "maintain harmonious labor relations"—that is, that don't use such hardball tactics against unions as lockouts or strikebreakers. Since each contracting qualification needs enforcing, the authority will be busy checking out a contractor's wage scale or the number of minorities he employs instead of making sure bricks don't fall on little girls' heads.

When the SCA came into being, Meyer Frucher, a Democratic insider who helped negotiate the agency's charter and then became Governor Cuomo's first appointee to its three-man board of trustees, understood clearly that changing the rigid civil service and union work rules culture was critical to the SCA's success. But the SCA's charter subverted that goal from the outset. The legislature staffed the new agency with all the Board of Ed's school construction personnel who didn't choose early retirement.

This move, Frucher admits, "was a straight union payoff." Legislators cut a deal in which District Council 37, which represents board bureaucrats, would agree to the transfer of school construction to the SCA—*if* no Board of Ed employees lost jobs. About 150 bureaucrats just picked up and moved from Brooklyn to their new offices in Queens. These were the very employees who had bungled so badly that lawmakers had to create the SCA to do their work. Yet instead of getting pink slips, they became charter employees of the new agency—some coming in with 40 percent raises. Frucher tried to negotiate down the number of jobs collective bargaining covered, but the transplanted *apparat* took root and flourished in its new home.

In fact, collective bargaining and civil service rules became even more entrenched and now cover approximately two-thirds of the SCA's 765 positions. "Titles were slowly added to collective bargaining, and it became much tougher to move, let alone remove, people," a former SCA executive says. Today, most of the SCA's construction managers—the officials charged with ensuring that work proceeds safely—receive the protection of collective-bargaining agreements, making them largely unaccountable. No matter how SCA employees perform, it is exceedingly difficult to reward them for excellence or fire them for shirking.

When the legislature created the SCA, the Board's Division of School Facilities didn't close down, so bureaucratic confusion and buck-passing flourish. The division still writes the SCA's five-year plans, setting its budget and telling it what to build, and it still has responsibility for routine school maintenance. Each agency aggressively guards its turf and, if something goes wrong, blames the other. Since the SCA does repairs while the division's custodians do maintenance, confusion is inevitable: it's hard to say where one jurisdiction ends and the other begins.

The Erasmus Hall fiasco perfectly illustrates the endemic buck-passing. When board architects surveyed the nearly century-old school in 1985, they estimated it would cost $22 million to renovate it. But they didn't notice the rotting metal supports for the terra-cotta facade, so, when the SCA did its own survey between 1990 and 1992, it estimated renovations would cost $62 million. This estimate was still $30 million short, since the SCA didn't notice that Erasmus's Gothic towers were collapsing. The SCA was five years into the renovation of Erasmus Hall before it finally got a fix on the building's condition. But instead of accepting responsibility, the SCA just blamed the board.

The SCA is indiscriminate about where it passes the buck. At Erasmus Hall, for example, the agency and the Fire Department blamed one another for placing holding rooms designed to protect handicapped people during a fire in a dangerous place, where they might not escape. The authority is equally energetic in fighting to keep other agencies off its turf. After the SCA had dragged its feet for years, a 1996 bond act gave the New York State Power Authority $125 million to

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replace coal boilers throughout the state's schools, most of them in the city. But the SCA refused to issue the permit that would allow the rival authority to do the work, fiercely guarding its right to carry out repairs—though it still didn't remove the boilers. Only when the Power Authority let SCA personnel oversee the actual construction work did the SCA relent—over a year later. The SCA cynically held children's health hostage to ensure a monopoly over a job it had shown no inclination to do. As Meyer Frucher observes, "School construction is New York's Bosnia."

It's often said that a strong leader can make all the difference at a public authority through sheer force of will. When the SCA's first president, Major General Charles Williams, a veteran of the Army Corps of Engineers, assumed office, newspapers hailed him as a savior. "The general has quickly established a reputation for a kind of spit-and-polish discipline and for wresting command of construction from the bureaucrats," gushed a *New York Times* profile in May 1990. "Not a single job is behind schedule, he says, and several are ahead of schedule."

The agency installed a $300,000 wheelchair ramp that ended up directly under a basketball hoop in the gym.

Hardly. With a $4.3 billion agency under him, Williams developed almost overnight the imperious habits of a big bureaucratic boss. Trustees first got nervous when he sought to install an executive gym, private bathroom, and study—for himself. When trustees shot down this scheme, the general still installed bulletproof windows in his office, though scores of schools had windows with rotting frames. Williams greatly exaggerated the progress and grossly understated the cost of the SCA's construction projects, misrepresentations that eventually caught up with him. Just over two years after he took command of the SCA, nearly a year before his contract ended, the authority's three unpaid trustees forced the general out.

The idea that a single forceful personality can fix the SCA dies hard. When architect Martin Raab became SCA president in November 1996, excitement again ran high. Here was a man with 40 years of private-sector experience. A few months later Raab, too, was out, and the SCA had its third president in less than three years, Milo Riverso. Changes at the top of a fossilized system mean little.

It is instructive to see just how the SCA's defects translate into cost overruns, faulty work, and drop-dead indifference. Start with design. Its key is meticulous detail, for an unscrupulous contractor can use design ambiguities to take unwarranted shortcuts or force "change orders," those emendations of a contract that always cost much more than if the same work had been part of the original deal. The in-house design team, one of Gotham's largest, drafts most of the SCA's designs, but its architects produce inferior work and regularly fail to detect errors made by firms they contract with for those designs they don't do themselves. "Designs would go out incomplete, so the contractor had room to fudge," recalls former outside inspector of the SCA Richard Sklar. "The SCA was getting screwed on the change orders." During a project at P.S. 152, design problems required 59 change orders, accounting for $1.2 million of the $57 million renovation cost. Every former SCA official I interviewed—even those who defend the agency's performance—agreed: junking the design department would be a boon.

Perry Sandler, principal of P.S. 145 in Queens, discovered firsthand how lax SCA's designs could be three years ago. The agency had renovated the school over summer vacation and had installed a $300,000 wheelchair ramp that ended up directly under a basketball hoop in the gym. "A kid who went to do a layup would wind up on the wheelchair ramp," Sandler told me. "At that point I went ballistic—this was done by an architect who just didn't know what a gym was supposed to do." Just as galling, Sandler adds, the contractor never questioned the SCA designer's judgment, prompting Sandler to say, charitably, "The workmen must never have seen a basketball game

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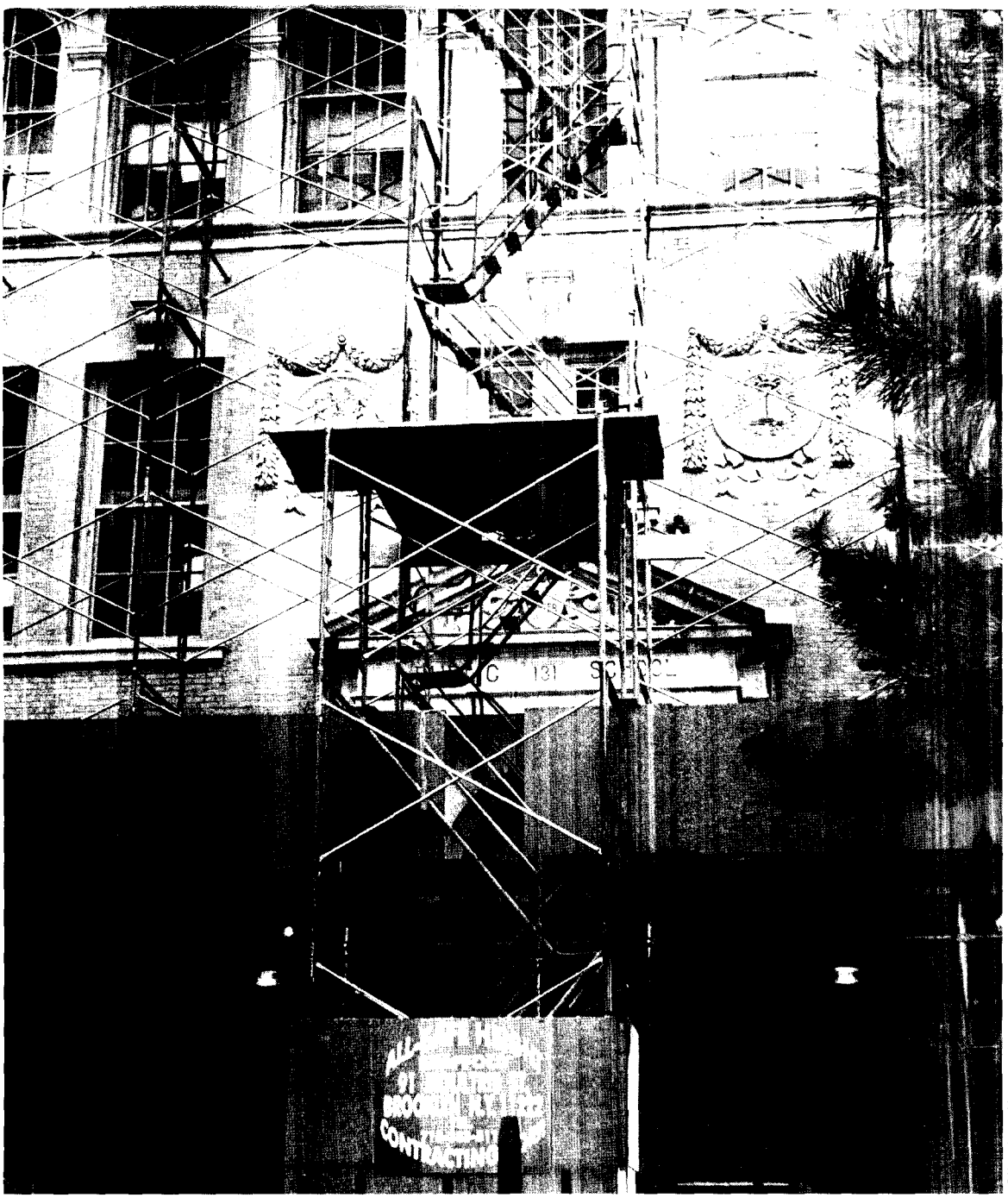

ASAGAI BARTON

. . . but now it can't even repair Brooklyn's P.S. 131 without killing a pupil.

before." The unfazed SCA justified the ramp's bizarre location: after all, it was in the plans, bureaucrats said.

The agency brings the same fecklessness to supervising the actual building or repair of schools. "Construction is a very simple, mundane, penny-pinching business," says Dale Hemmerdinger. "It doesn't take a rocket scientist, but it requires a lot of attention to detail. You have to have someone who cares that the job comes out on time and on budget." SCA officials, protected from rewards and punishments by civil service rules, collective-bargaining agreements, and bureaucratic buck-passing, have no incentive to care, and they usually don't. When he acted as watchdog, Richard Sklar couldn't get SCA officials to bargain with contractors: "The mentality of the public employees was not to be tough on contractors," he says. Often, too, project managers don't know the business well enough to keep contractors from outsmarting them. They frequently approve exces-

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sive change orders and accept delays, while failing to ensure quality and safety.

How easy is it to bilk the SCA? Just ask GNA Paint and Construction. In 1995, the authority hired the company to paint classrooms. GNA got paid by the square foot—so it inflated square footage. Since paint jobs that go higher than 12 feet above the ground require expensive scaffolding, the contractor added a few inches to the real height and billed at the scaffolding rate, though no scaffolding ever went up. Amazingly, GNA got away with this obvious rip-off until a *disgruntled painter* blew the whistle. Comptroller H. Carl McCall's 1996 audit revealed that this lack of supervision was no fluke: in 85 percent of the negotiated change orders he looked at, the SCA made no effort to discover the reasonableness of the contractor's estimate.

The SCA once gave an $18.7 million contract to a firm that drew complaints from three of the four schools where it had worked.

The SCA can't even save money when it sets fixed-fee contracts, since it just disregards them, to its own disadvantage. The agency hired a firm to supervise building at West Queens High School, agreeing to pay a fixed $588,000 fee. But the SCA later signed follow-up agreements, giving the company an extra $233,000 for performing services agreed to in the first contract. Reason: the firm claimed higher payroll costs—so the SCA gave it a bonus for either hiring more people or paying its workers more money to do the same job. The company not only had no reason to keep costs down, it had incentives to maximize them, since the SCA was footing the bill.

SCA rules dictate that a project officer evaluate a contractor's work before the agency makes its final payment, but in 93.5 percent of audited projects no final quality-control evaluation took place. In other words, the SCA doesn't care if the job gets done right. This failure to evaluate affects not just current projects but also future ones, for inferior work doesn't stop contractors from getting rehired. The SCA once gave an $18.7 million contract to a firm that drew complaints from three of the four schools where it had worked. But even when the agency does catch shoddy work, the law's requirement to award contracts to the lowest bidder makes it hard to ban substandard contractors from future work. Several times, the SCA gave new contracts to firms whose work the agency itself rated unsatisfactory. Since quality costs money for a contractor, such perverse incentives invite poor-quality work.

It's hard not to sense an almost arrogant indifference on the SCA's part to its customers—the school principals and, ultimately, the taxpayers. The authority doesn't ask for input or feedback from principals and superintendents, who complain that they don't even know how to contact the SCA when they encounter delays, poor workmanship, or mistaken designs. In this spirit, the SCA bestowed an industrial-arts classroom on P.S. 217 that it then had to redesign, because the school doesn't teach industrial arts.

Even a journalist soon runs into the SCA's arrogant indifference. I asked Deborah Perry, Senior Manager for Government-Community Relations, how much the SCA spends and how long it takes to build a school. She didn't know and didn't want to find out. I persisted: how many schools has the SCA built? How many are you working on? Unembarrassed, Perry admitted she "didn't know off the top of my head." When she called the next day, she still had no answers. "Complying with your request was not as efficient in terms of my time and energy as I thought," she explained.

The SCA's indifference seems limitless. In 1994, it told state senate investigators that it had completed repairs at ten Brooklyn schools, but when the investigators contacted the schools, they discovered repairs hadn't even begun at three and remained incomplete at a fourth. Worse still, the 1994 audit by the comptroller's office discovered that of the thousands of minor capital-improvement projects the Board of Ed turned over to the SCA in 1991 and 1992, the agency had no record of 17 percent of them. In other words, it just

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misplaced, forgot, or threw away 17 percent of its business.

The SCA builds too few schools for too much money, wastes tax dollars wantonly, and treats its customers, from principals to the public, with disdainful arrogance. Is it surprising, then, that ten years since it took over from the Board of Education, frustration mounts? "People say, get rid of the SCA," Deputy Chancellor Spence told me. "Well, what the hell is going to replace it?"

Not another public agency, that's for sure. If there's one thing we can learn from the SCA's debacle, it's that transferring responsibilities from one government agency to another accomplishes nothing. That's why Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's call for a state commissioner to monitor the SCA is without merit, too. After all, it's not which agency or level of government takes care of school construction, but what rules and incentives guide it. The SCA's liabilities—the Wicks Law, bidding restrictions, collective-bargaining agreements, and the bureaucratic blame game—will find no internal cure without radical legislation from Albany. But that's highly unlikely, given the special interests involved: "I'd love it if the SCA wasn't under civil service rules and collective bargaining," Spence says. "As a matter of political feasibility—it's extraordinarily slim."

An alternative exists. Private firms can do everything the SCA does, so why hold the city captive to this one agency? Instead, the Board of Education could use the so-called turnkey model of public contracting. The board would offer the SCA's role to a private developer for a set number of years. The developer would want to do good work, since exit clauses would allow the board to fire him easily. If he did well, the board would renew the contract. The board would give the developer a list of what needed doing, but he'd hire the designers, builders, and other workers as he saw fit. After the schools got built, he would turn over the key to the board—hence: the expression, "turnkey." This private-sector alternative has already been successful in New York, since the Division of School Facilities uses it for leasing buildings, saving 50 percent over the SCA's costs, despite a major bogus-billing scandal two years ago. And Niagara Falls's Board of Ed recently hired Honeywell, Inc. to coordinate construction of a new school, so the idea may be catching on.

A common objection to privatizing any public contracting operation is that it would invite corruption. Certainly, the SCA's inspector general has been successful at fighting mob influence, blacklisting potential contractors who have even a whiff of Cosa Nostra about them. Crime runs deep in the construction industry, but while the SCA has had occasional cases of kickbacks and bid rigging, graft is rare in its operations. The anticorruption effort comes with a high price, though. The SCA employs a garrison of crime fighters, including more than 50 full-time investigators and prosecutors who work directly for the inspector general and 15 prosecutors on call from the attorney general's office, adding up to about 8 percent of administrative overhead.

Is blacklisting the most effective means to eliminate corruption? A large body of research says no. A developer shouldn't care if a contractor's cousin is a wise guy; he can avoid being swindled through careful supervision. Private developers don't hire people who've cheated them in the past, and they supervise contractors to make sure they don't get cheated in the present.

Another obstacle to privatizing school construction is that the legislature may well handcuff private contractors who take over that responsibility with many of the same restrictions that bind the SCA. As Spence warns, "You would go into the legislature with a good clean model, and they would layer it with so many protections for the unions and building trades. The legislature would hand you back junk." Reformers who seek privatization will have to watch carefully to make sure they get the right kind of privatization.

"It's about time we run a competition for school construction," Spence says. "Let's see what the private sector can do without the encumbrance of 7,000 restrictions." After a decade of the SCA's dereliction, that sure makes sense.

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Sol Stern

The Rebirth of American History?

Photographs by Leonard Freed/Magnum

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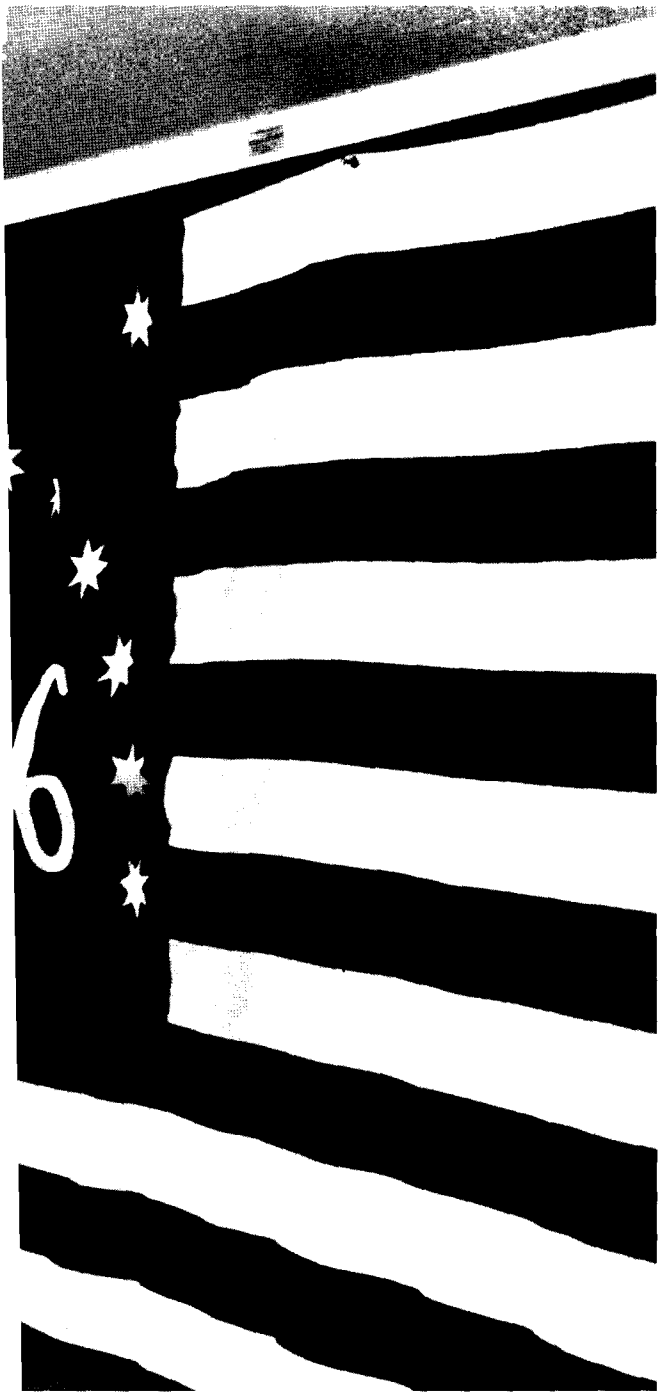

At New York's Academy of American Studies . . .

"What can we Americans do to keep ourselves from declining as a great power?" a questioner asked the best-selling British historian Paul Johnson recently.

"You have to believe in yourself," replied Johnson, author most recently of *A History of the American People*. "To do this, you must teach your children about your history. Instill in them what's in the Constitution. They should know large parts of the Declaration of Independence by heart. This will lead to a belief in America itself." Having lived through his own country's loss of confidence and precipitous decline, the 69-year-old Johnson knew whereof he spoke.

In the schools, hopeful signs point toward a recovery of our national past—the glue that holds our common civic culture together.

Though Americans notoriously haven't been taking this advice for several decades—schools have taught little of our national history, and taught it execrably—hopeful signs are on the horizon. A new series of unabashedly patriotic American history textbooks has sold over one million copies. A few states, particularly Virginia, have instituted rigorous standards of what public school pupils must study in required history courses. And in New York City, an innovative public high school that focuses on American history is inducting classes filled with immigrants into that unique tradition of freedom and inclusiveness that is the indispensable glue holding together the nation's common civic culture. It is giving these newcomers the means, as George Washington put it, to become "assimilated to our customs, measures and laws; in a word soon become one people."

But before looking at these hopeful signs of renewal, consider for a moment the dark background of historical ignorance that makes these signs look so especially bright by contrast. Many of the nation's middle schools and high schools no longer offer American history, and New York State's high schools require only a single, two-semester course in *post–Civil War* U.S. history. The majority of American students leave high school historically illiterate. According to the 1994 nationwide tests administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 57 percent of high school seniors scored below the minimally passing grade. Only one in four could tell in which century Lincoln was president, and only

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one in five knew anything about Reconstruction. "In most countries the study of history is inseparable from the spirit of the country," the historian John Patrick Diggins has written. "The United States is the exception."

The little that high school students do learn about our past is largely a swamp of error and special-pleading. Government standards of what kids should know are part of the problem. In a fit of political naiveté, the Bush administration's chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Lynne Cheney, hired the National Center for History in the Schools to develop the first-ever set of national history standards. This outfit's head, UCLA's Gary Nash, exemplifies the triumphant march of 1960s New Left graduate students through university history departments. His scholarly writing stresses the importance of social movements of the "oppressed" over "white-oriented hero-worshiping" history. His book, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America,* purports to show that the American polity sprang not so much from the Eighteenth-century European enlightenment as from a great "convergence" of European, American Indian, and African influences, in equal parts.

The first version of the National History Standards in 1991 set off one of the fiercer battles of the culture wars. Indian lore dominates the early parts of the text; George Washington merits two mentions; Western civilization drops a few more notches in importance. But working-class and feminist protest, as John Patrick Diggins observed, "parades itself through the text until it seems as though the only meaning of history lies in the shouts coming from the streets. In the NHS, 1968 lives!"

After much public sniping—99 senators expressed dismay, as did mainstream historians, such as Diane Ravitch and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who cling to that battered old revolutionary ideal of *E pluribus unum*—Nash's group issued a revised set of standards, which eliminated some of the more egregious examples of anti-Western, anti-white-male bias. While the earlier draft, for example, depicted the cold war as a kind of "swordplay" between two equally blameworthy superpowers, the revised draft conceded that there really was such a thing as Soviet totalitarianism and that Stalinist repression in Eastern Europe provoked an appropriate response from the West. These changes mollified some. But the revised standards remain heavily multicultural.

Nevertheless, instead of history, whether multicultural or not, what most schoolchildren get is an unwholesome brew called social studies, concocted by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), which represents the teachers of such stuff. From its start in the 1920s, the NCSS has believed that academic history—which some of its leaders have disparaged as "pastology"—is elitist and irrelevant. The organization has successfully lobbied state education departments to require little or no history. Instead, it has filled the schools with a hodgepodge of "global studies," "cultural studies," even "peace studies"—which present all cultures and civilizations as equal in value. A dash of therapeutic programs, from self-esteem to conflict resolution to AIDS awareness, completes the social studies mix.

These topics make at least a smattering of history inescapable, but most high school social studies teachers are ill-equipped to teach even that fragment. According to Diane Ravitch, only 18 percent of them have completed a college major or minor in history; most of the rest are education-school grads. In New York you can teach high school social studies (and even 11th-grade American history) without having taken a single college-level history course.

If the NCSS had its way, America would reconstruct its entire educational system to reflect a race- and gender-centered philosophy of pedagogy and child development. The organization's official policy paper, "Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education," is one of the scariest documents in American education today, going far beyond the demand that social studies curriculums vent the grievances of a rainbow coalition of ethnic and racial groups. In the tone of a commissar's lecture at a political reeducation camp, the NCSS exhorts teachers, administrators, and other school employees to think and act multiculturally during every moment of the school day, lest they become accomplices of American culture's lurking racism. School personnel should scrutinize every

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aspect of the school environment—from classroom teaching styles and the pictures on the walls to the foods served in the lunchroom and the songs sung in the school assemblies—to be sure they reflect "multicultural literacy."

At the heart of the NCSS guidelines lies a fundamentally racist assumption. "[T]he instructional strategies and learning styles most often favored in the nation's schools," the guidelines declare, "are inconsistent with the cognitive styles, cultural orientations, and cultural characteristics of some groups of students of color." These students flourish under "cooperative teaching techniques" rather than the "competitive learning activities" that work for white kids. This assertion sounds dangerously close to City College professor Leonard Jeffries's vaporings about black "sun children" and white "ice children." Certainly, for the NCSS, the ideal of a race-neutral classroom is a mirage. Teachers who strive toward a single standard of excellence, who presume to treat all students equally, are doing something harmful, not admirable. We are left, finally, with this Orwellian conclusion: "Schools should recognize that they cannot treat all students alike or they run the risk of denying equal educational opportunity to all persons."

In New York you can teach high school social studies and 11th-grade American history without having taken a college-level history course.

Those students who do study history usually study it out of textbooks that are, in about equal measure, mendacious and dull. Gilbert Sewall, a former *Newsweek* education writer who, as director of the American Textbook Council, has studied the textbook industry for years, notes that since the 1970s publishers have come under intense pressure from various left-wing advocacy groups (some with federal government financing) to create a politically correct, multiculturalist version of American history under the guise of eliminating "racist or sexist" material from the books. One such organization, financed by liberal Protestant churches, published a 1988 volume called *Thinking and Rethinking U.S. History*, which was brutally frank about its intentions. "We explicitly believe that all textbooks and all literature are on the side either of progress, of the status quo, or of regression," it opined. Here is the view of America's founding that the group wants children to derive from social studies textbooks: "We see the Revolution of 1776 as—among other things—a step in achieving greater social justice for one group of people—white males."

Today's history (and social studies) textbooks are unreadably dull because, in addition to multiculturalism in content, they also reflect an affirmative-action approach to authorship. The authors are not individuals but committees, backed up by consultants and teacher-reviewers, all chosen according to the textbook industry's diversity requirements—so many blacks, so many Hispanics, so many women.

In a recent speech, Sandra Feldman, the new president of the American Federation of Teachers, warned that without strong public schools, America will have a situation "where our rich diversity becomes a source of balkanization and division, because common public schooling will no longer be the way into the American mainstream and will no longer hold our society together." Feldman may not have noticed, but it is organizations of public school educators like the NCSS that are trashing the very idea of an "American mainstream," producing the "balkanization and division" she rightly fears. Only by returning to the study of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, of Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, all part of the "spirit of the country," can we recapture a common civic culture for our children.

That resurgence isn't coming from organizations like Feldman's union or the NCSS but from grassroots movements of dissident parents, teachers, and concerned citizens. It is a movement for change from the bottom up, as Gary Nash would put it. Private citizens are beginning to fight back, as in California, where parents, including a large

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. . . high school kids born in countries from Colombia to Yugoslavia . . .

percentage of Hispanics, will almost certainly pass the June referendum that would sharply curtail bilingual programs in the state's schools, in an effort to get immigrant children immersed in the common civic culture as quickly as possible.

One of the brightest examples of the resurgence is the spectacular success of a fed-up parent who protested by becoming a historian herself. Joy Hakim, a reporter in Virginia Beach, became outraged with the way her children were being taught American history and resolved to do something about it. Disgusted with the children's stupefyingly boring textbooks, she concluded that she could do a better job herself. She wanted to tell a positive story about America in a coherent narrative style. It took her five years to complete *A History of US*, a ten-volume series aimed at chil-

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At last, Oxford University Press decided to take the risk But because Oxford doesn't "produce" books for the school market, it placed Hakim's books in regular trade-book stores—5,000 copies of each of the first five volumes The results were astonishing. Based almost entirely on word of mouth by parents and teachers who found the volumes while browsing in the likes of Barnes & Noble, Hakim's books took off. *The History of US* has now sold over one million copies. It has also penetrated the regular textbook market and is being adopted by hundreds of school districts around the country. "The lesson is," Hakim says, "that we shouldn't have any books in school that are not good enough to be in a bookstore."

The popularity of *A History of US* is even more encouraging when you consider its tone of optimism, its old-fashioned credo that America really is a new nation much greater than the sum of its multicultural parts. Listen to the triumphant message Hakim offers her young readers in the opening pages: "Learning about our country's history will make you understand what it means to be an American. And being an American is a privilege. People all over the world wish that they, too, could be American. Why? Because we are a nation that is trying to be fair to all our citizens. . . .

"We believe the United States of America is the most remarkable nation that has ever existed. No other nation, in the history of the world, has ever provided so much freedom, so much justice, and so much opportunity to so many people."

Hakim's history doesn't scant the shameful episodes in our country's past. At the start she tells her readers: "Some people will tell you of evil forces in the United States. They will tell you of past horrors like slavery and war. They will tell you of poverty and injustice today. They will be telling the truth.

"We didn't say the United States is perfect. Far from it. Being fair to everyone isn't as easy as you may think. (Do you treat everyone you know equally? How about people you don't like?) The United States government has made some terrible mistakes. It is still making mistakes. But usually this nation can, and does, correct its mistakes."

And then, horror of horrors, Hakim commits what any self-respecting multiculturalist would denounce as the cardinal sin of being "judgmental."

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She informs the children: "The more you study history, the more you will realize that all nations are not the same. Some are better than others. Does that seem like an unfair thing to say? Maybe, but we believe it."

Getting kids to learn "what it means to be an American," to come to the proud realization of their country's excellence, is a mission that has attracted two other private citizens from outside the orbit of professional education, businessmen and philanthropists Richard Gilder and Lewis E. Lehrman. They are tireless crusaders for the study of American history. Lehrman has taught history at Yale; Gilder (a member of *City Journal*'s publication committee) majored in history in college and is a generous funder of Civil War battlefield preservation. They hold the country's largest private collection of American historical documents, on loan to the Pierpont Morgan Library. Four years ago they established the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to reinforce the beleaguered troops battling for the preservation of American history in the schools.

Though the institute runs a full program of lectures, exhibits, and summer seminars for high school history teachers, its most dramatic and potentially most influential activity is its work in New York City's public schools. In 1995, it began special, extra-credit Saturday courses in American history for middle-school students in District 26 in Queens. Hundreds of students showed up, and the courses' unexpected popularity encouraged the institute to sponsor a special-theme high school in American history. In September 1996, the Academy of American Studies opened its doors, on the fourth floor of the rundown, 100-year-old former Long Island City High School. The entering freshman class, 125 strong, came from all over Queens.

In one sense, the Academy of American Studies is just another star in a constellation of more than 100 experimental "new vision" public schools, created as smaller, somewhat more autonomous alternatives to the city's big, bureaucratically run, geographically zoned high schools. But the Academy of American Studies is unique in the extraordinary amount of extra academic work its focus on American history actually requires. In addition to the regular state-mandated three years of social studies, the Academy requires students to take four years of very rigorous American history courses. Every student thus carries six academic classes each semester, more coursework than most students take at the elite Stuyvesant and Bronx Science High Schools. In addition, with funds the Gilder Lehrman Institute contributes, all the students take trips throughout the year to historic sites such as Valley Forge and Gettysburg.

What makes the Academy even more noteworthy is that it doesn't draw its students from the academically gifted. Under Board of Education rules, it must select its students (half of them by lottery) from across the spectrum of achievement as measured by standardized tests. The typical Academy student scores in the 60th percentile in standardized tests, often speaks a foreign language at home, and comes from a working-class background. In this school, the academic study of history is hardly an elite enterprise.

"Why should it be?" asks Richard Gilder. "These immigrant kids come here not knowing much of our story. But the study of American history makes them understand that this nation is based on great ideas, and that thousands of people were willing to die for those ideas. I want those kids to become proud of our national heritage, to understand that they have the same right to this history of ours as anyone who has been here for 15 generations."

To enter the battered old building housing the Academy is to come face-to-face with the dilemmas springing from a national policy of unfettered immigration combined with a school culture of de-Americanization. On the first three floors of the building is a special high school for new immigrants, called the Newcomers Academy. Some 1,000 students with limited English skills are trying to get up to speed in the English language while they begin taking some regular academic subjects, an admirable goal. But the posters I saw hanging on the walls raised perplexing questions. Under the big heading "Multicultural," one of them showed examples of the students' essays, all of them on their former countries. Another poster,

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a collection of pictures of students, bore the title "Diversity." It was as if those in charge of the school were announcing their ambivalence about their students' assimilation into American culture.

Three flights upstairs, at the Academy of American Studies, the visitor sees no such ambivalence. Every one of the school announcements, the lists of honor-roll members, and examples of student work are mounted on poster boards with an American flag in the background. Clearly, the purpose in this school is not to look backward to where the children came from but forward to their new country. Like Hakim's books, the school unashamedly trumpets America's ideals and achievements.

The Academy's principal, Michael Serber, 58, walked me through the corridors during a class break and stopped to ask over a dozen students where they or their parents came from. In just a few minutes I had met children from China, Colombia, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, and Yugoslavia. Serber, a former social studies chairman at a large Queens high school, jumped at the chance of directing the Academy, not only to have his own school but to help plan a real history curriculum. "What's called for in the state curriculum, one year of American History that only covers the period after the Civil War, is really insufficient to give young people any real insight into the events and individuals that made the country what it is," he told me. "That's particularly true out here in Queens for all these immigrant kids. I really believe that the bond that can hold people from different countries and cultures together is a shared understanding of America's past."

I sat in on a ninth-grade American history class taught by 31-year-old Mark Solkoff, one of Serber's two history teachers. The day's lesson: the development of religious freedom in colonial America. The students had read sections on the Pilgrims and Roger Williams from an excellent, traditional, three-decade-old textbook that would now be considered hopelessly politically incorrect. They also read some original documents, including the *Remonstrance of the Inhabitants of the Town of Flushing to Governor Peter Stuyvesant*, asking for the extension of tolerance to non-Christians wishing to settle in New Amsterdam. Solkoff was making a personal connection for these immigrant children, getting them to see that 300 years ago, in their very own borough, other newcomers to these shores were laying the groundwork for the nation's principles of inclusiveness and religious tolerance. He posed a question to the class: "Why was the idea of separating religion from the state so important to the new settlers?" A student from Pakistan responded: "Because they escaped from countries where the king tried to force them to go to a church they didn't believe in."

She informs the children: "The more you study history, the more you will realize that all nations are not the same. Some are better than others."

I visited the tenth-grade history class, covering the Civil War period. The students had been broken up into groups, each with a Civil War battlefield map and other readings, and each assigned to report on one of the major battles of the war—Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Richmond. One student from each group stood up and delivered a short talk on how the battle his group was researching had developed, who won, how many casualties resulted, and what the battle's importance was to the course of the war. Each student seemed totally engrossed in playing armchair general.

Academy students don't gloss over the problematic aspects of American history. The tenth-graders were completely familiar with the Amistad episode long before the movie came out. Posted on the walls were mock abolitionist newspapers the students created for one of their assignments. They included reports on one of Frederick Douglass's most bitter speeches on the evils of slavery. The ninth-graders were reading John Chester Miller's *Wolf by the Ear*, a critical biography of Jefferson that discusses the moral issues regarding Jefferson's holding of slaves and the more controversial aspects of his private life. Loredana Purneval, a 15-year-old sophomore born in Romania and one of the Academy's acade-

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. . . take four years of American history courses—and get excited about them.

mic stars, remembers that last year her ninth-grade class's unit on Jefferson ended with the students engaging in a debate: "Was Thomas Jefferson a hypocrite or a product of his times?" Says Purneval: "It was the most interesting thing we did. Here was a great leader who said, 'All men are created equal,' yet he owned slaves. Jefferson once swore on 'the altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the minds of men,' yet he was in favor of forcing the Indians to give up their way of life. But we didn't just listen to the teacher telling us what was right. We had to do a lot of reading and then come to a conclusion by ourselves."

One of the other books the ninth-graders read is Richard Brookhiser's 1997 biography of George Washington, *Founding Father*. Last winter, when the Academy invited Brookhiser to speak to the

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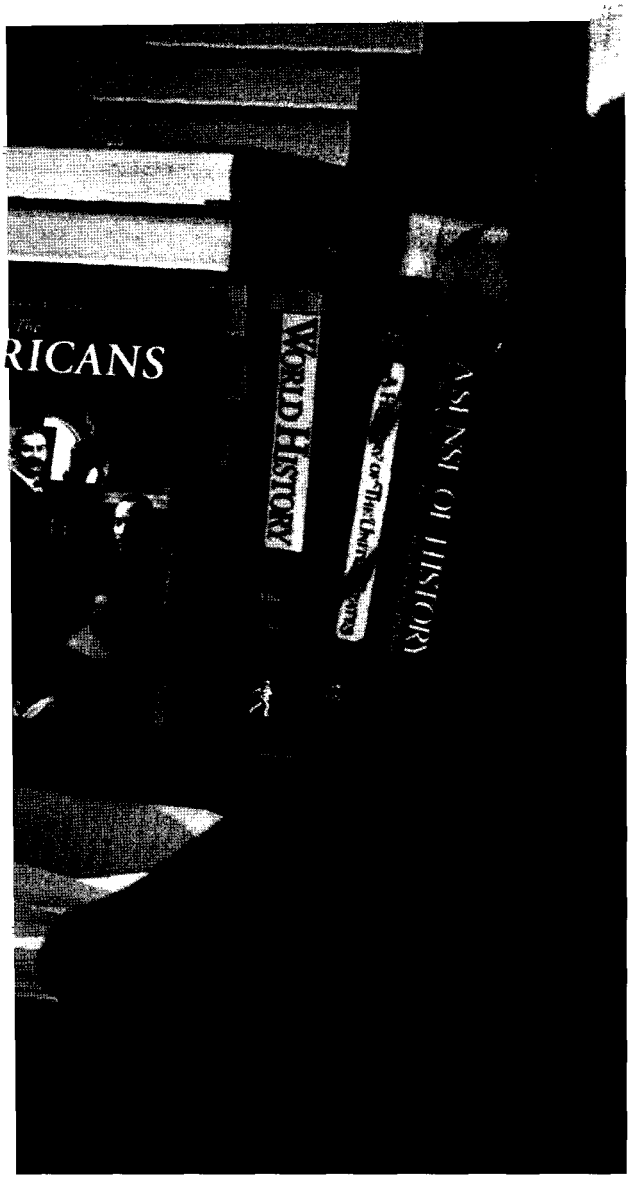

students, he didn't know what to expect. After all, with his book's heavy emphasis on Washington's heroic leadership as key to the success of the American Revolution, it is a defiant example of history written "from the top down"—an approach most public school social studies teachers dislike. So Brookhiser was more than pleased to discover that not only was his book an assigned text at this school full of immigrant children but also that the students could thrill to his tales of Washington's military and political exploits.

"Those kids really paid close attention," Brookhiser recalls. "What really excited them was the military aspect of Washington's career. They clearly responded to that. Their questions about the various battles were intelligent." Brookhiser found it an uplifting experience. "The last time I can recall Washington being associated with a school was when his name was taken off a school in New Orleans, because he was a slaveholder. But this was an important man, a great man, who had an enormous influence on the way this country was created. And these students were interested in getting a look at everything he did."

Over 800 students from all over Queens applied this year for the 125 openings the Academy has for incoming freshmen next fall. Michael Serber doesn't fool himself into thinking they all want to come for the American history component; parents also like the school's small size and safe, nurturing environment. Yet the first two years of the school's operation have demonstrated that ordinary New York City high school students from a wide variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds are willing to work extra hours to achieve some mastery of this country's complex history—the "pastology" that the social studies profession so disdains.

Next fall, another American history high school will open in Brooklyn, modeled on the Academy of American Studies. The Gilder Lehrman Institute is working on having one in each borough soon. In that, there is a great measure of hope. The success of the Academy and the popularity of Joy Hakim's books exemplify the grassroots efforts needed to extricate the public schools from the wasteland professional educators created when they expelled American history. The multiculturalism that replaced it now seems to have no other purpose but to demoralize our children about the country they live in, while keeping them ignorant about the glorious past that gives them so promising a future. ●

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Sex Ed's Dead End

Wendy Shalit

Sex education is another one of those solutions that only make the problem worse. Let's shut it down.

The ninth-grade sex education instructor, says the New York City Board of Ed's *HIV/AIDS Curriculum Guide*, is to shuffle 13 index cards, pass them out, and instruct the children to arrange themselves in the proper order, like so: "Buy a latex condom," "Buy a contraceptive foam or lubricant . . . ," "Check to make sure condom package is not torn . . . ," "Check condom expiration date," "Remove condom from package," "Check to see which way the condom unrolls," "Squeeze the tip of the condom to press out air," "Place the condom on the erect penis," "Unroll the condom onto the penis . . . ," "Apply the foam/lubricant," "After

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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ejaculation, hold onto the base of the condom," "Carefully withdraw penis," "Wrap the condom in a tissue or piece of paper and discard." Teachers often call this game "Condom Line-Up."

When the teacher demonstrates how to use a condom, according to the Board of Ed guidelines, she is to stretch it out, explain that "one size fits all," and then unroll it on two of her outstretched fingers. It is certainly a curious exercise, since sexual intercourse with anyone under 17 constitutes a crime in the state, and those who are enjoined to "buy a condom" are 14. However, more fascinating still is the black warning box suspended in midpage: "Teacher Note," it reads: "Make sure that learning-disabled and all students understand that a condom goes on the erect penis, and not on the fingers as demonstrated."

The imagination is certainly compelled. Is this a common problem? The boy and girl, both 14, are obediently conjoining, when suddenly the girl recalls what

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they learned in class that day. "Wait, *stop*! We aren't practicing safe sex!" The boy fumbles for his crumpled-up jeans beside him and manages to pull out a condom—free, thanks to former chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez. He unrolls it, just as they showed in class. "Is it on your finger?" asks the girl anxiously. "Yeah, don't worry," he reassures her. "Whew," she says, "that was close!"

In the world of the sex educators, you can start talking about AIDS in kindergarten (as the New York mandate directs), and by the tenth year of sex ed, students *still* will not know how to do it right and do it safely. We are told that kids will "do it anyway" by the very people who assure us in the next breath that kids don't know what they're doing. This stubborn ignorance on the part of our sex education pupils serves an important social purpose. Just think: if kids could do it like their parents did it, without the help of all these educators and coordinators, then a fair number of people would be out of a job.

In New York, five comprehensive health coordinators, one per borough, work for the Board of Education. One of them, Delores Cozier, explained to me that they are the "trainers of trainers." They teach teachers, who in turn teach the teachers who will actually implement the sex education guidelines in their classrooms. The guidelines require teachers to add a sprinkling of sex ed to ordinary lessons. "So if you're teaching *Romeo and Juliet* in literature class," Cozier explains, "the teacher could stop and ask, 'Do you think they practiced safe sex?' "

New York requires every child to take five 45-minute sessions of HIV instruction in grades K–6 and six in grades 7–12. Parents can pull their children out of the "methods of prevention" class (i.e., condoms) but not the rest. Under the kindergarten guidelines, "students will learn: the difference between transmissible and non-transmissible diseases; the terms HIV and AIDS; [and] that AIDS is hard to get." Next, the kindergartners learn how people do get it. In first grade, they'll learn about new HIV treatments. The guidelines instruct teachers to "hold up [a] picture of Superman or Superwoman" and then tell pupils that, just as Kryptonite weakens Superman, so the HIV virus weakens the body's immune system, but that "new treatments for HIV/AIDS act like Superman's/Superwoman's lead shield." They protect the immune system from the AIDS virus.

However dramatic, this analogy isn't accurate, of course, as the many deaths from AIDS each year will testify. But according to the *Curriculum Guide*, the point isn't really accuracy but rather the fostering of certain desirable attitudes: "Children need to know that although sexual intercourse *can* present risks, sexuality is a natural and healthy part of life. HIV/AIDS instruction should not create unnecessary fears about sexuality and sexual intimacy." So AIDS instruction for first-graders includes telling them that, because of the new treatments, they shouldn't worry about acting any differently because of the disease.

Sex ed has become nearly ubiquitous and almost always conveys the same reductive story: sex is all about physical pleasure—and preventing the unwanted effects of pursuing it. Today 37 states and the District of Columbia require schools to provide STD/HIV/AIDS education, and 23 states require comprehensive sex education. The basis for many of the current comprehensive programs nationwide is a publication issued by SIECUS, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten-12th Grade.*

The guidelines advise that by the time children reach the age of five they be told that "it feels good to touch parts of the body" and that "some men and women are homosexual, which means that they will be attracted to . . . someone of the [same] gender." Latency period, anyone? Not anymore. According to SIECUS, "values inherent in the *Guidelines* include": that a "sexually healthy adult will appreciate his or her own body," "affirm his or her own sexual orientation," and "enjoy and express his or her sexuality throughout life." Also, he or she will "exercise democratic responsibility to influence legislation dealing with sexual issues." Someone who doesn't vote

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for a SIECUS-favored candidate, therefore, isn't just a bad citizen; he is sexually unhealthy.

SIECUS lists "Fantasy," "Oral sex," and "Pleasure" as suggested "sexuality topics for parent-child discussions." "It is normal," reassures Felix E. Gardon, outreach coordinator of SIECUS, "for you to feel uncomfortable talking to your children about sexuality," but you must. "Approaching the issue when your children are still toddlers" is ideal. Gardon even provides some tips for "talking with infants and toddlers (0–2 years)" about sex, making sure they know all the real names of all the parts of their body and so forth. You may be only "0" years old, but since, as the *Guidelines* state, "all persons are sexual," that includes *you*.

New Jersey's *Family Life* program begins its instruction about birth control, masturbation, abortion, and puberty in kindergarten. Ten years ago, when the program started, teachers were uncomfortable with it. According to the coordinator of the program, Claire Scholz, "some of our kindergarten teachers were shy—they didn't like talking about scrotums and vulvas." But in time, she reports, "they tell [me] it's no different from talking about an elbow." In another sex ed class in Colorado, all the girls were told to pick a boy in the class and practice putting a condom on his finger. Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, get a head start on AIDS instruction, teaching it in second grade, four years earlier than state requirements.

It is very strange to be on the receiving end of all this enlightenment, before the onset of sexual awakening. I remember when the sex educator arrived in my fourth-grade Wisconsin public elementary school classroom, carrying a Question Box, with black question marks all over it. It was our learning tool, she explained. Opening the lid, she pulled out a long white slip of paper and cheerily read: "And the first question is . . . 'What is 69?' "

Some boys in the corner giggled. "Now remember, boys and girls," the woman continued, "there is *absolutely nothing* to giggle about! The first thing we're going to learn in Human Growth and Development is that *no* question is off limits!" After what seemed like 69 attempts to explain the number 69, I raised my hand: "May I please go to the bathroom?" I hid there for awhile that day.

A week later, in time for our next sex ed class, I arrived at school toting a note from my mother. Thereafter, I sat out sex ed in the library. I always felt bad for the girls who didn't have this escape, because after each sex ed session, as the lockers slammed and everyone prepared for the next class, the boys would pick on them, in a strange, new kind of teasing.

"Kelly, do you *masturbate*?" one boy would say. Then another boy would say, "It's really *natural* to masturbate, you know." Or: "Why aren't you developing, Kelly? It's time for you to be developing, didn't you hear? You may be a treasure, Kelly, but you ain't got no chest!"

"So if you're teaching *Romeo and Juliet* in literature class, the teacher could stop and ask, 'Do you think they practiced safe sex?' "

And so on. Invariably, I noticed, just before the girl would burst into tears, she would always say the same thing: "The teacher says that if you tease us about what we learn in class, then you haven't understood the principle of RESPECT." Respect is a very important doctrine in sex education class. Indeed, sex ed teachers often use Respect, a puppet turtle, to teach elementary-school children about their "private places." Unfortunately, the sex ed teacher would be gone by then, so no one really cared about what we had learned from Respect the turtle.

My public school wasn't unique. In 1993, more than 4,200 school-age girls reported to *Seventeen* magazine that "they have been pinched, fondled or subjected to sexually suggestive remarks at school, most of them . . . both frequently and publicly." Researchers from Wellesley College, follow-

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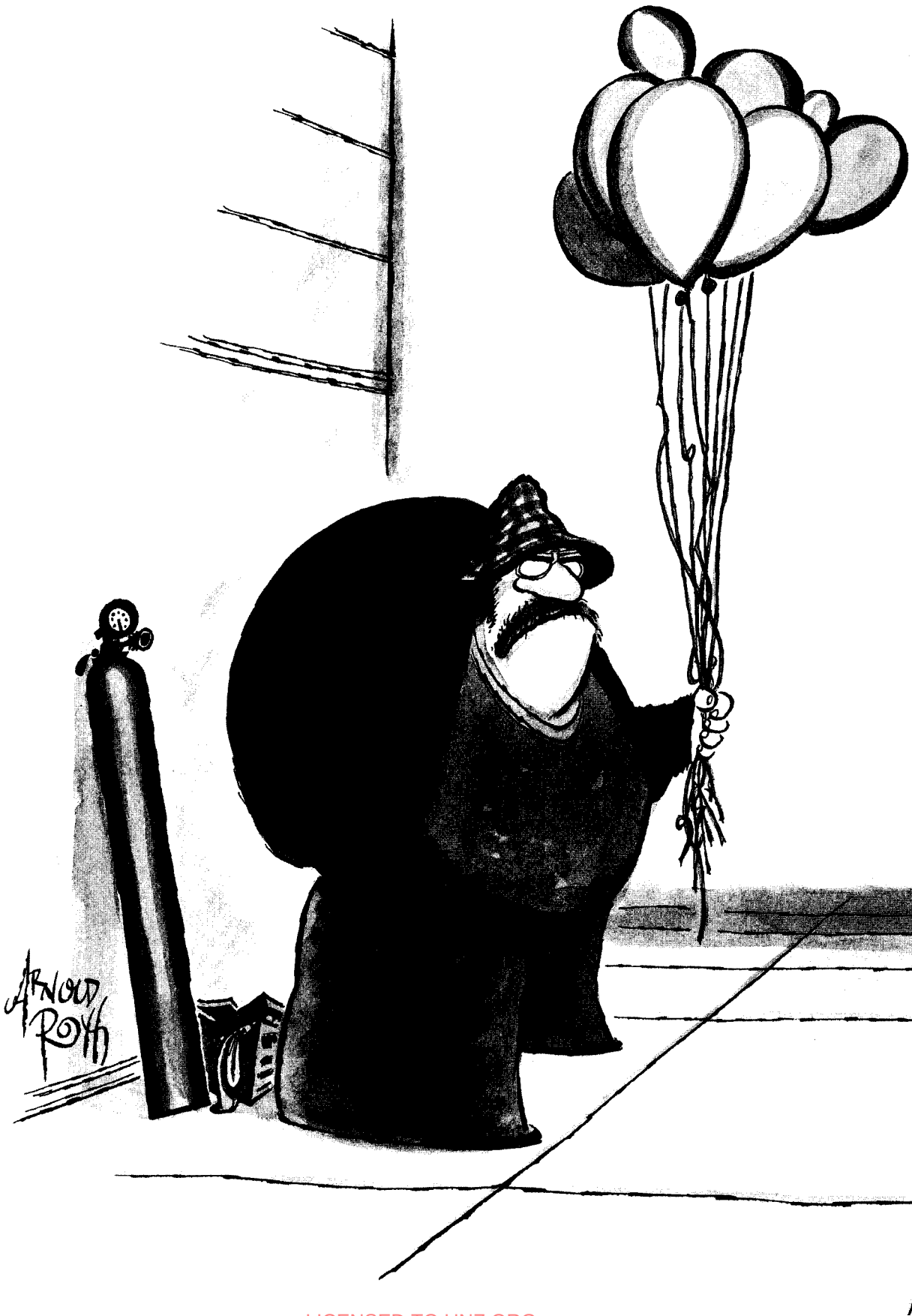

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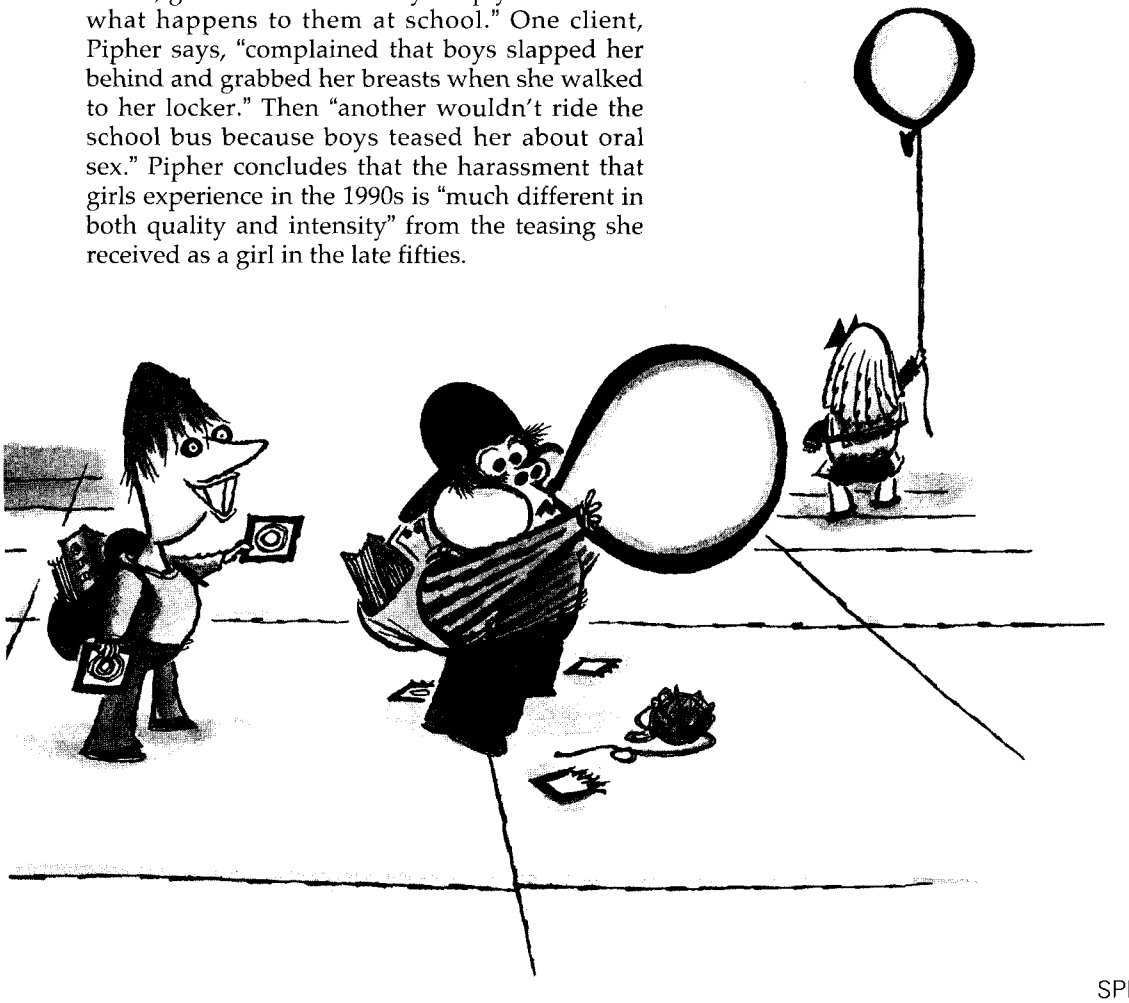
ing up on the magazine's survey, found "that nearly two-fifths of the girls reported being sexually harassed daily and another 29 percent said they were harassed weekly. More than two-thirds said the harassment occurred in view of other people. Almost 90 percent were the target of unwanted sexual comments or gestures." School officials do very little about this, the Wellesley College researchers also found. One 13-year-old girl from Pennsylvania told them: "I have told teachers about this a number of times; each time nothing was done about it."

More recently, psychologist Mary Pipher reports in *Reviving Ophelia* that she is seeing an increasing number of girls who are "school refusers," that is, girls who "tell me they simply cannot face what happens to them at school." One client, Pipher says, "complained that boys slapped her behind and grabbed her breasts when she walked to her locker." Then "another wouldn't ride the school bus because boys teased her about oral sex." Pipher concludes that the harassment that girls experience in the 1990s is "much different in both quality and intensity" from the teasing she received as a girl in the late fifties.

For some reason, no one connects this kind of harassment and early sex education. But to me the connection was obvious from the start, because the boys never teased me—they assumed I didn't know what they were referring to. Whenever they would start to tease me, they always stopped when I gave them a confused look and said, "I have no idea what you guys are talking about. *I* was in the library." They would almost be apologetic: "Oh, right—you're the weirdo who always goes to the library." And they would pass me by.



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But teasing is the least of it. As they confidently promote this early sex education, our school officials are at a loss when it comes to dealing with the new problem of sodomy-on-the-playground. It's hard to keep up with all the sexual assault cases that plague our public schools in any given month. Take only two examples, both reported in the New York *Daily News*: "A 15-year-old girl was sexually assaulted at her Queens high school this week, police said. The victim . . . told cops she was accosted by four teenage boys about 12:45 p.m. Tuesday in a stairwell at Hillcrest High School. . . . While two of the boys stood lookout, the other two sodomized the girl, police said. . . . The attack at Hillcrest occurred less than two weeks after six students were charged in two sodomy attacks on a girl at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Manhattan" (October 17, 1997).

"Four Bronx boys—the oldest only 9—ganged up on a 9-year-old classmate and sexually assaulted her in a schoolyard, police charged yesterday. . . . [The girl's mother] said she is furious with Principal Anthony Padilla, who yesterday told parents the attack never happened. . . . The girl's parents and sisters are also outraged that when the traumatized third-grader told a teacher, she was merely advised to wash out her mouth and was given a towel wipe" (October 21, 1997).

The associative link between the disenchanting of sex and increased sexual brutality among children works like this: if our children are raised to believe, in the words of that New Jersey kindergarten teacher, that talking about the most private things is "no different from talking about an elbow," then they are that much more likely to see nothing wrong in certain kinds of sexual violence. What's really so terrible, after all, in making someone touch or kiss your elbow?

It may turn out that the natural embarrassment sex education seeks so prissily to erode points to a far richer understanding of sex than do our most explicit sex manuals. Today, those in kindergarten are urged to overcome their "inhibitions" before they have a clue what an inhibition means. Yet embarrassment is actually a wonderful thing, signaling that something very strange or very significant is going on. Without embarrassment, kids are weaker: more vulnerable to pregnancy, disease, and heartbreak.

If "overcoming your embarrassment" is one mantra of sex education, "taking responsibility for your sexuality" is another. The health guidelines for the ninth grade in the Newton, Massachusetts, public schools, called the *Student Workbook for Sexuality and Health*, inform us that not only do "Sexually Healthy Adolescents . . . decide what is personally 'right' and act on these values," but also they "take responsibility for their own behavior." Grown-ups get the same advice. Author Karen Lehrman warns: "What does undermine feminism is women . . . refusing to take responsibility for their sexuality." Camille Paglia writes: "Every woman must take personal responsibility for her sexuality."

Fine: but if you're a child, you're not sure what taking responsibility for your sexuality entails. And as you grow up, the cult of taking responsibility for your sexuality is essentially a call to action. It inculcates a view of sex that is autonomous and cut off from obligation—whether familial obligation or obligation to one's "sex partner" (as the locution has it).

If "taking responsibility for your sexuality" means "decid[ing] what is personally 'right' and act[ing]" accordingly, that holds true even if what is "right" for you is homosexuality. (The cool postmodern quotation marks around "right" tell us that the term is relative not absolute, subjective not objective—nineties morality through and through.) And sure enough, that's the message the SIECUS fact sheets on "Sexual Orientation and Identity" teach: "SIECUS believes that an individual's sexual orientation—whether bisexual, homosexual, or heterosexual—is an essential part of sexual health and personality. SIECUS strongly supports the right of each individual to accept, acknowledge, and live in accordance with his or her orientation." In other words, pick an orientation and act on it, the sooner, the better.

In Massachusetts's sex ed program, says Ron Barndt, a Newton public high school teacher, there

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is a "real emphasis on trying to normalize homosexuality." High schools are pressured to create Gay/Straight Alliances, to promote a "healthy relationship between people of different sexual orientations." All over the school, placards read: "Are you aware that 1 out of 10 people are gay?" or, "How do you know what orientation you are?" Former governor William Weld's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth recommended "that every High School in Massachusetts which does not have a Gay/Straight Alliance form one."

Last July, Alexander Sanger, president of Planned Parenthood of New York City, penned an op-ed in the New York *Daily News*, "Sex Ed is More Than Just Saying No: Teens Need All the Facts," explaining why he opposed programs that "preached abstinence." Such programs, he charged, "gag educators rather than teach and empower teens" and therefore "don't merit our money or support." Contends Sanger: "In a perfect world, teenagers would wait until they're older and wiser to have sex. But the fact is, 75 percent of American teens have sex before high school graduation. In New York, more than 54,000 teens, ages 15 to 19, become pregnant each year." Therefore, he concludes, "teens need all the facts."

Where does he think all this high school sex and all these pregnancies are suddenly coming from? Doesn't he find it even a *bit* curious that the more we do what he prescribes, the more such behavior occurs? Most studies find that knowledge about AIDS or HIV does not decrease risky behavior. A 1988 study in the *American Journal of Public Health*, which examined exactly the year when public health information about AIDS grew, found that no increased condom use among San Francisco's sexually active adolescents resulted. A 1992 study in *Pediatrics* conducted a broader investigation and ended up warning: "It is time to stop kidding ourselves into thinking that our information-based preventative actions are enough or are effective." This shouldn't be so surprising. As New York's sex-ed *Curriculum Guide* argues explicitly: "children need to know" that "sexuality is a natural and healthy part of life. HIV/AIDS instruction should not create unnecessary fears about sexuality and sexual intimacy."

The few studies that do demonstrate that sex education changes the behavior of students conclude it is only likely to make them more sexually active. A 1991 study in *Family Planning Perspectives*, for example, found that instruction on contraception was significantly correlated with an earlier onset of sexual activity. Even the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which supports contraceptive-based sex education, notes that teen pregnancy rates have increased 23 percent from 1972 to 1990, and a full one-third of the nation's 20 million STDs yearly strike teens—all during the years comprehensive sex education became widespread.

But beyond this, how does Alexander Sanger imagine he was born, if his parents were never given "the facts"? The ground in dispute was never *whether* we would get the facts—but how and when. Do we get the opportunity to seek out the facts when we are ready? Or do we have them forced upon us when we're not ready, when we're inclined to yawn about the whole thing and conclude it's no big deal? It's really not very complicated why so many kids are getting pregnant these days, now that we have so much sex education on top of a wholly sexualized culture. It's because sex is not a big deal to them, and because they think this is what they are expected to do. They are just trying to be normal kids, to please people like Alexander Sanger and prove that they are "sexually healthy." So not only has sex education failed on its own terms, but it has worsened the problem it was intended to solve.

All over the school, placards read: "Are you aware that 1 out of 10 people are gay?" or, "How do you know what orientation you are?"

Sex educators have no shortage of explanations for why their programs don't work. Like the advocates of so many other failed nostrums, they con-

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tend that we haven't pushed sex ed hard enough. For example, Randy Sheiner, the Senior Public Health Educator for the New York Department of Health, recently aired his frustration over the New York public schools' condom-distribution program with me. In most schools, he explained, "you have to go all the way to the resource room to get these condoms, and kids might not want to do that. Therefore, the people most at risk, they're not getting their complete education. It flies in the face of self-awareness."

How could we possibly get more "comprehensive" than AIDS education in kindergarten and condom availability in high school? "Woodies," Sheiner replied. "Woodies are wooden models of penises. Without them, it's very hard to know how to put on a condom properly. So far we're not allowed to have them." This if-we-only-had-woodies philosophy seeps through all of sex education. If we were only a little more explicit, a little more perverse, a little less squeamish, *then* we could finally attain sex education Arcadia: no diseases, no unwanted pregnancies, no hurt feelings, and no obligations.

If sex ed is failing at its primary goal of keeping kids from getting pregnant, how is it doing at its secondary goal of giving them sex lives rich in pleasure and fulfillment? The vision that sex educators inculcate, starting with kindergarten—a vision of autonomous sexuality stripped of all embarrassment—leads to relationships that are utterly disenchanted. The young men and women of my generation don't "make love"; they merely "hook up" when they come together. Here is *Sex on Campus: The Naked Truth About the REAL SEX Lives of College Students*, 1997, explaining the "hook-up": "If you realize almost immediately after you finish having sex that this will definitely be a one-time-only event and you really don't want to pursue any relationship—even a purely physical one—with this person, try not to sleep through the night with the person. It may seem awfully awkward and it may be late at night, but get up, get dressed, say, 'Thank you for a wonderful evening,' and go home. . . . Leaving someone with whom you've just traded bodily fluids can seem strange, rude, and inconsiderate, but at least you'll have the knowledge that you were being honest, and it will make things less complicated down the road."

Hook-up is my generation's word for having sex (or oral sex) or sometimes for what used to be called "making out." The hook-up connotes the most casual of connections. Any emotional attachment deserves scorn and merits what *Sex on Campus* calls a dangerously high "ball-and-chain rating." It's a strange expression, hooking up—like airplanes refueling in flight: not just unerotic but almost inanimate. Without embarrassment or "hang-ups," we are finding, there cannot be any surrender. We can only hook up.

Sex education failed because it got the reality exactly backward: in fact students are smart and already know how it's done. When young, they look to adults not, *pace* SIECUS, to explain "fantasy," "oral sex," and "pleasure" to them, but to know what it all means, where it all is leading: that is, they want to know from adults how *not* to do it. But to those in charge of sex education, abstinence is unrealistic and there's never anything of value in sexual sublimation. At times, their kids-will-do-it-anyway ideology even takes on a racialist tinge. As Felix Gardon avers in a recent SIECUS fact sheet, abstinence education "will prove devastating and problematic for low-income communities with Latino, African-American, Asian Pacific and Native American populations." These groups "are involved in sexual behavior" and apparently cannot control themselves. Without sex educators like Gardon toting condoms and showing them the True Safe Way, all would be lost.

New York State law requires sex educators to spend some time discussing abstinence, but it is an incomprehensible notion to them. As Delores Cozier, the Board of Ed's health coordinator, puts it, "Sure, I do believe in abstinence. If you start with a child coming out of the womb, he's abstinent. But after that, abstinence is a choice. The Bible also says you have to procreate. How you gonna procreate if you're talkin' about abstinence?"

It is not hard to see why, in the context of sex education, abstinence is not compelling: it is just one choice out of many—the choice for immature kids,

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who aren't "ready yet." Little wonder, then, that the Alan Guttmacher Institute found that the abstinence program widely used in California schools "produced only small changes in some teens' sexual attitudes but did not affect the frequency of intercourse or the number of sexual partners."

But programs that present abstinence not in a relativistic way but as the unequivocally right thing to do often succeed. A 1996 Northwestern University Medical School longitudinal study found that 54 percent of the teens who had been sexually active before participating in an abstinence-centered program were no longer sexually active one year later. And whenever Lakita Garth, a former Miss Black California, travels around the country to talk to kids about why they should be abstinent until marriage, she receives a deluge of letters. "The irony of it all is that people say kids don't want to hear an abstinence message, especially these troubled kids," she reports. "But they're actually the most receptive. I couldn't believe the response."

Disenchanted sex hasn't seemed to increase the sum of happiness for my generation, certainly not for the women. We're flocking to Jane Austen movies because we're sick of having the facts shoved in our faces all the time, and we want to be permitted to hope for something more in our lives than all this dreary crudeness. Even in one of its own reports, SIECUS admitted that girls are much less likely than boys to say that they "really feel good about their sexual experiences so far." They are also more likely to say "they were 'in love' with their last sexual partner." The solution to all these romantic disappointments? More sex education.

Yet as time passes and these girls become women, their pain seems only to grow sharper. The March 1998 issue of *Glamour* magazine, for instance, reports that 49 percent of women wish they had slept with fewer men, compared with 7 percent who wish they had slept with more men and 44 percent who are happy with their number as it is. Those who were happiest with their number were generally those who, like Nina, 30, had had one partner—her husband. As for the majority of women who were unhappy with their sexual experiences, they were for the most part like Ellen, 29, who said: "I wish I hadn't given so much of myself—I feel that some of my experiences thinned my soul, and such an effect takes time to undo." She had 23 partners. No diseases: presumably she practiced safe sex. Her predicament is one that the sex educators cannot address and, indeed, can only worsen. Her unhappiness comes not from knowing too little, but from knowing too much, too soon.

In her 1993 memoir *The Beginning of the Journey*, Diana Trilling describes the simple courtship she had with famed literary critic Lionel Trilling in the late twenties: they dated, they drank cocktails, they argued heatedly over politics. "On Bullfrogs and Alexanders, Lionel and I got to know each other well enough to decide to marry." Six months prior to their wedding, they went to bed together, she reveals, a fact that caused her deep shame at the time. Would her father find out? It was a radical act, a real risk, "a violation of convention." In her world, "necking was the chief premarital sexual activity." In any case, in six months they married, and after their 50 years together, Trilling says, "I have never met any man to whom I would rather have been married." Though they fought, to be sure, "over a long lifetime, we loved each other very much, . . . and there was never a time or situation in which we could not trust or count on one another."

And yet, and yet . . . after half a century with Lionel and some two decades as a widow, Trilling wonders: was the hush-hush way her generation treated sex really right? "At seventeen," she writes, "I overheard my mother talking to a woman of a younger and more progressive generation than her own; she was explaining that the sexual ignorance—'innocence' was the word she used—in which she and her contemporaries reared their daughters was designed to preserve their illusions. Was she, I wonder, being honest?"

However reluctant Trilling may be to admit it, though, her illusions were for the most part fulfilled. She could always count on Lionel; she had "never met any man to whom I would rather have been married." Hers is an all-too-common refrain among women of a certain age. They gen-

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erally take for granted the dating, the courtship rituals, the early marriage they enjoyed, and—what now almost never exists—the lifetime companionship, the simple trust one has with a spouse who is also one's first lover. To them, "innocence" is always in ironic quotes; it was just a word their mothers used. They do not make the connection between this initial innocence and the lasting love that came after. They do not realize that those earnest, highly sublimated political conversations they had are impossible now because adolescents flatter themselves that they are getting right to the point by just having sex. They do not realize that if boys and girls argue seriously at all anymore, they will argue only about the girl's "hang-ups."

And so they wonder, as if trying on a new dress: Hmm . . . maybe I was oppressed? Maybe, in retrospect, the expectation that I be a virgin at marriage was calculated to cheat me out of a good time? They seem to fancy they are being worldly and up-to-the-minute by contemplating such daring thoughts. They have no idea how naive they sound to the women who came after them, who drool over, and would give up their law careers for, the kind of lifelong love Mrs. Trilling describes—for the kind of world that, at the end of her life, she was so prepared to toss into the garbage bin.

Even SIECUS is starting to realize that all is not well in the world of sex ed. In an astonishing 1997 report, *But Does it Work? Improving Evaluations of Sexuality Education,* SIECUS essentially conceded defeat. A team of experts, 15 of the "nation's most prominent researchers in sexuality education," concluded in an October 1996 symposium that sex ed hadn't done a thing to reduce teen pregnancy or delay the onset of sexual intercourse. But these goals are "extremely difficult to attain," the panel protested. "Teenage childbearing is affected by many social and economic factors such as poverty, racism, sexism, job opportunities, past history of sexual abuse," and so on. What's more, "changing human behavior is difficult and . . . simple educational efforts themselves have often met with limited success."

We should evaluate sex ed according to different criteria, the panel argues. Proper "evaluations of comprehensive sexuality education should go beyond measuring changes in whether young people are having intercourse, or whether they are using a contraceptive method." (Whenever one hears the word "beyond" in this context, it means that the end of that subject is near, as in, "We need to go *beyond* students just memorizing their multiplication tables.") "Evaluations of school-based-sexuality education should focus on changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Be cautious about measuring outcomes outside the classroom." Be cautious about measuring anything tangible, that is; only measure outcomes that cannot be measured.

Why in the world are we spending tax dollars on all these educators, coordinators, and alliances, if they don't do a thing?

Let us give sex education the benefit of the doubt. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that it is in no way responsible for the rise in teenage pregnancies, that it is in no way blamable for the rise in school sexual assaults, and that it is in no way answerable for the degradation of sex to a mere "hook-up." If we accept SIECUS's explanation that sex education has met with "limited success" only because there are simply so many other variables at work, well, isn't that even worse? Why in the world are we spending tax dollars on all these educators, coordinators, and alliances, if they don't do a thing? Why are we wasting precious class time on all these programs if indeed "changing human behavior is difficult" and "educational efforts themselves have often met with limited success"?

"Woodies" aside, the simple fact remains that you just can't get any more comprehensive than teaching about AIDS in kindergarten. If that doesn't work, there is nothing left to do but pack up your Question Box and go home.

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Kamikaze Budgeting

William J. Stern

How much economic damage will the city's bad budget and the state's worse one inflict?

New Yorkers have seen it all before: a Wall Street boom sends tax dollars cascading into the state and city treasuries . . . budget-writing politicians throw taxpayers' money around as if the happy days will last forever. . . the boom ends (as in a cyclical industry it always must) . . . and city and state both wake up with an even worse economic hangover than they've been nursing for most of the last 30 years. And here we go again. Governor George Pataki has issued a 1998-99 budget that vies for honors as the most fiscally irresponsible in the state's history. And Mayor Rudy Giuliani's 1998 budget, while a model of rectitude when compared with his recent predecessors' budgets and with the governor's profligacy, still fails to come to grips with the deep, structural economic problems that have bedeviled the city for half a century.

For both the city's and the state's economies, the problem has long been chronic overspending that in turn requires high levels of taxation way out of line with the rest of the country, in an age when businesses can move anywhere in search of low-cost, low-tax environments. In New York State, state and local taxes—averaging $4,671 per taxpayer last year—amounted to 15.3 percent of the average taxpayer's income, compared with 10.7 percent in business-friendly Texas, 10.8 percent in Georgia, and, across the river in New Jersey, still only 11 percent. As for local taxes alone, New York City dwellers paid 2.75 times more than the residents of the average northeastern or midwestern city and an amazing 4.36 times more than taxpayers in the new, expanding cities of the West and Southwest in 1994.

The result of such unwillingness to exercise real fiscal restraint is a persistently sluggish economy that for decades has started losing jobs well before national recessions begin and has stopped losing them well after the rest of the country, that gains jobs wanly when the rest of the nation is ebulliently churning them out, and that consequently ends up with proportionally fewer jobs overall than competing states and cities. Had New York State kept pace with the rest of the nation between 1982 and 1994, its total number of jobs would be 1.4 million higher than its actual total, according to Change New York, a fiscal watchdog group. While the rest of the country churned out employment between 1990 and 1996, New York State lost almost 332,000 jobs, and last year, when employ-

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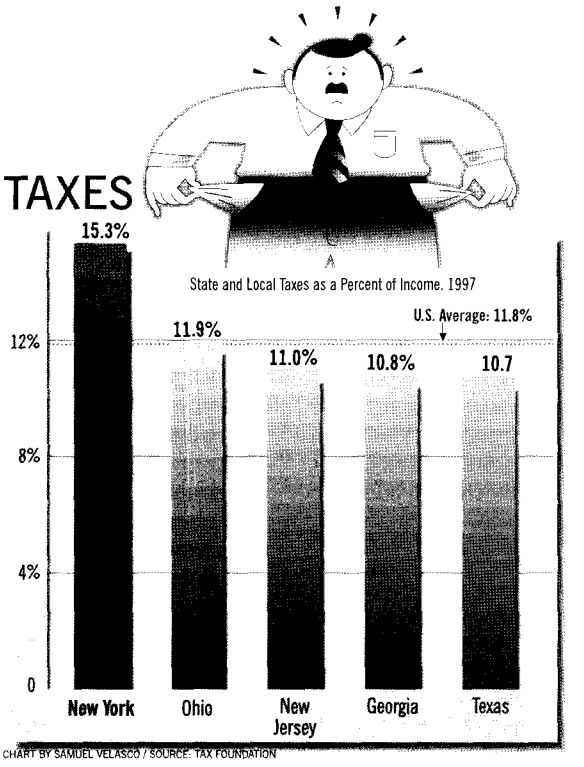
ment in the U.S. grew by an estimated 2.7 percent, New York State—even with money raining down on Wall Street—saw job growth at less than half that rate, a plodding 1.3 percent. And that's the state's best performance in 14 years. As for New York City, a recent study in these pages—completed before flush times both on Wall Street and in the tourism industry produced 54,800 new jobs—showed that, had Gotham's economy just kept up with the average big city of the Northeast or Midwest for the last 35 years, the five boroughs would have 750,000 more jobs than they have now. Had the city retained the job-creating power that it had in 1962, it would have 1 million more jobs than it has today ("New York's Million Missing Jobs," Autumn 1997).

How profligate is Governor Pataki's budget? Calling for $71.9 billion in spending, it is—in real terms, given lower inflation rates—more spendthrift than any of Mario Cuomo's porcine budgets. It fattens state-funded spending (the part of the budget the federal government doesn't finance) by an artery-clogging 8.5 percent over the preceding year. And just like Cuomo's lethal mid-eighties' budgets, it doesn't make any real use of its $1.8 billion surplus to help get the state's fiscal affairs in order so that it won't face a crisis when the next downturn inevitably arrives.

That's why it's hard to be enthusiastic even about the eventual 20 percent reduction in the state's income tax promised in the governor's grab bag of spending hikes and tax cuts. It may never happen. After all, Mario Cuomo canceled promised tax cuts in 1988, after the 1987 stock market crash slowed the torrent of tax revenues. Since both parties in the state legislature hate spending cuts, any drop in revenues is likely to produce either tax increases or the suspension of promised tax cuts—not belt tightening. Reneging on promised tax cuts, of course, is worse than never promising them at all. It produces bedlam. Businesses then see New York as not only the most costly place for commerce in the U.S. but the most unpredictable. Uncertainty, which makes planning nearly impossible, threatens businesses just as much as high tax costs, and it causes them to cancel their expansion plans or simply pack up and leave.



As for the surplus, New York State could spend it usefully. Above all, Governor Pataki could use it to help finance a state takeover of Medicaid, a huge expense that strangles the state's municipalities. Every state but Arizona and New York splits the enormous cost of Medicaid 50-50 with the federal government; local governments pay nothing. New York forces its municipalities to pick up 50 percent of the non-federal share, which for New York City comes to 15 percent of its local revenues, a crippling amount that about equals the city's structural deficit and that will total some $2.7 billion in fiscal 1998.

Liberation from this burden would be a huge plus for Gotham's economy. And once the state had to pay for all of Medicaid's non-federal share, legislators would have an incentive to control its runaway costs. Since they can now give away $1 in benefits at a cost of 25 cents to the state budget, legislators have loaded on every optional benefit to Medicaid, from artificial insemination to false teeth, to gain the gratitude of constituents, health-care providers, and health-care unions, while the localities have to raise taxes to pay their share of the cost. Reining in these costs, which taxpayers pay whether out of their state or their local pocket, would prove a boon to the state's fiscal health. (See "Medicaid's Fatal Attraction," Winter 1996.) The governor would have picked up political chits

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from hard-pressed mayors and county executives from Long Island Sound to Lake Erie.

But the Pataki budget lavishes funds on highly questionable projects. One egregious example: the $45 million that Pataki plans for the Empire State Economic Development Fund, a two-year-old program that subsidizes businesses and various local development agencies. Managing the fund is the state's $168 million-a-year Empire State Development Agency, which, among other projects, recently paid $6 million for a practice field for the Buffalo Bills football team. This kind of state-directed capitalism, in which government substitutes its bureaucratic thinking for the market's invisible hand, results in poor investment decisions and widespread corruption, with politicians and businessmen exchanging favors rather than pursuing market efficiencies. The IMF is currently insisting that Asian countries end just this sort of crony capitalism. New York has pursued state-directed capital investment since the late seventies, and it has done nothing for the economy, which ranks near the bottom in job creation, 48th of the 50 states.

New York's brand of state capitalism goes even further in the new budget, since the state will spend nearly half a billion dollars—a large percentage of the surplus—on the Community Enhancement Facilities Program, essentially a special-interest welfare program for sports and arts lovers. Two sports projects have made the most news, and both are bad ideas. The state plans a $63 million renovation of Rich Stadium, home of the Buffalo Bills, as part of a lucrative lease package to keep the team in western New York, and Albany will fork over $14 million for a minor league baseball park for Suffolk County. The justification for these big sums is that stadiums produce jobs, profits for businesses, and tax revenues for governments. They call it the "multiplex effect." But studies by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and economist Edward Mills of Northwestern University have clearly shown that sports facilities contribute nothing to economic development. What they really do is line the pockets of political insiders. The sports industry isn't the only special interest the new budget rewards. Arts funding, "upper-income welfare," as Raymond J. Keating of the Small Business Survival Committee correctly puts it, has increased a frothy 20.5 percent.

The Pataki budget's biggest failing, however, is to misspend vast amounts on primary and secondary education. The governor proposes an increase of $518 million—a 4.7 percent hike—for New York State's public schools, following a similar increase last year. But greater school funding hasn't improved the schools: SAT scores stagnate well below the U.S. average, while more than 20 percent of the state's public school students fail minimum reading requirements and do even worse in math. Shoveling money to the dysfunctional education industry without tying funds to better results implicates Pataki in the ongoing disaster. Moreover, Change New York complains that money being sent to school districts through the STAR (School Tax Relief) program—supposedly a dollar-for-dollar offset against local property taxes—shows up as unrestricted school aid in Pataki's budget, without an accompanying mandatory school-tax cap. Without a cap, school districts are more likely to waste the STAR money than to use it to reduce property taxes.

When we move to higher education, matters don't improve: here, too, Pataki squanders money without demanding accountability. He budgets an additional $118 million on the State University of New York and the City University of New York, without discussing the need for reform—such as means-testing tuition—or even what the state is trying to accomplish in financing its enormous university system. In fact, SUNY has long been a patronage mill for politicians. More troubling still, Pataki wants to plow $3 billion over the next five years into SUNY construction projects, including a $10 million, 7,500-seat sports stadium at Stony Brook—all paid for with borrowed money for future New York taxpayers to repay.

The Pataki budget's profligacy threatens to bury New York under a towering mountain of debt. Comptroller Carl McCall, nobody's idea of a fiscal conservative, expressed grave reservations about the debt level the 1998-99 budget contains. McCall warns that the governor's five-year capital plan

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will ratchet up debt service 40 percent, to $4.5 billion, and will reduce pay-as-you-go financing of non-federal capital projects to 14 percent, down from 37 percent today. By the end of the five-year capital plan, total state-supported debt per person will have increased 22 percent, from $1,860 to $2,270. Pataki's spending plan promises gigantic out-year budget deficits. The projected gap for 1999-2000 runs to $2 billion, and that figure presupposes—dubiously—that the state will receive $250 million in tobacco-company settlements. Deficit estimates for the following year run as high as a disabling $4.8 billion.

New York's $68.5 billion debt burden dwarfs that of other large states, outweighing California's by 50 percent, for example, despite the Empire State's much smaller population. In fact, New York's debt far exceeds that of Texas and California combined and, as a percentage of personal income, surmounts Texas by 400 percent. Since 1985, New York State's debt has increased 241 percent, impelling Moody's Investor Services to lower the state's bond rating below any state's except Louisiana's. A poor bond rating increases borrowing costs, making debt financing ever more oppressive. To continue in this direction—when New York's debt service already gobbles up 10 percent of the budget—threatens to rob the state of whatever budget flexibility it still retains.

Along with piling up debt, the governor's budget expends the balance of the $530 million reserve fund the state set aside last year as insurance against economic downturn, as if good times were all that lie ahead. Of course, the reserve itself is symptomatic of what's wrong with the state's fiscal priorities: it is a way of piling up money to ensure that even when bad times arrive, the state won't have to cut excessive spending.

If Governor Pataki thinks New York has outgrown its economic quandaries, he's entertaining a dangerous fantasy. In New York City, home of the financial service industry, unemployment through the nineties has been closer to double-digit, continental-European levels than to those of the rest of America. Upper New York State continues to be an economic disaster area, untouched by the rust-belt

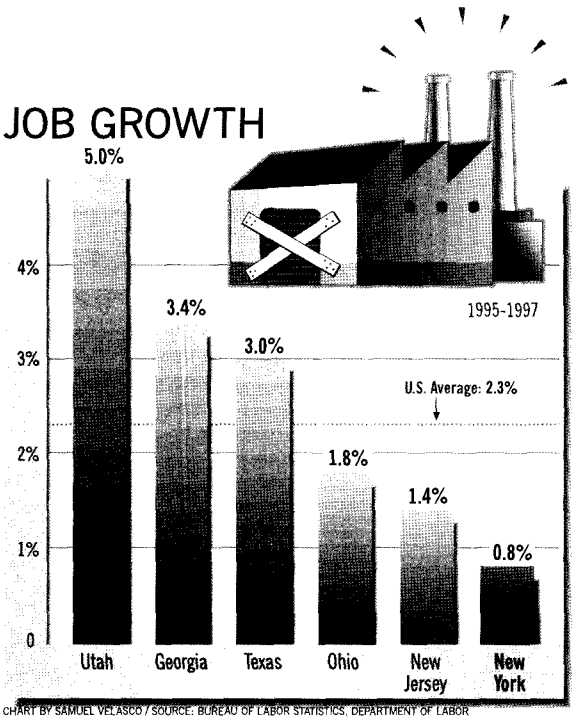

CHART BY SAMUEL VELASCO / SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

boom. In many upstate communities, real recovery from the recession of the early nineties hasn't happened. During 1996, for example, upstate New York created a pitiful 1,800 jobs, while Massachusetts, with roughly the same population as upstate New York, launched 60,000. Ohio, similar demographically and industrially to western New York, created 48,000 jobs. Small wonder, then, that the educated young flee upstate New York for opportunities elsewhere. New York's budget surplus has created an illusion of a robust economy, but the reality is considerably less healthy.

Why did Governor Pataki propose so terrible a budget—after three relatively restrained earlier budgets and so much rhetoric of fiscal prudence? One explanation is narrowly political: the budget is Clinton-style triangulation, co-opting the opposing party's agenda, leaving them nothing to run against, while arrogantly assuming that your own party's supporters have nowhere to turn. The budget might be part of Pataki's effort to secure 60 percent of November's vote, sufficient to carry Senator D'Amato and the rest of the Republican ticket to victory with him and push the governor to national prominence. Currently riding high in the polls, Pataki might just pull it off. After all, the governor won 1994's race with an unenthusiastic 28 percent of the vote in New York City—where the popular New York City mayor opposed him—

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and with a strong third party candidate gaining 7 percent of the vote in some upstate communities. This year, Mayor Giuliani's support virtually ensures a stronger showing in the city, while the only possible third-party candidate on the horizon is Lieutenant Governor Betsy McCaughey Ross, who might run as a Liberal who will siphon votes from the Democrats.

There's another, perhaps deeper, explanation for Pataki's bad budget: the governor belongs to a political culture without true political convictions. The Reagan revolution, which discredited the ideal of big government throughout American politics during the eighties, never arrived in New York State. As a result, the Republican party maintains close ties with the construction industry, organized labor, the education cartel, and municipal labor unions—all supporters of the welfare-state idea of government. Seen in this light, Pataki's half-hearted effort to reform rent regulation last year, which succeeded only in killing the possibility of reform for a generation, was a clear precursor of his budget proposal.

Perhaps those interested in a real New York economic recovery, one that would provide widespread opportunity to all the state's citizens, look in the wrong direction. The state's Republican party has long been part of the problem of New York's spending addiction, not its solution. The only New York governor over the last 40 years who actually fought for spending restraints was a Democrat—Hugh Carey. When Pataki released his budget, the speaker of the New York City Council, Peter F. Vallone—like Carey, a centrist Democrat from the outer boroughs with a strong legislative background—bluntly told the truth: "George Pataki's proposed budget is the most fiscally irresponsible in history," he said. Vallone, a candidate for governor who has worked successfully with Mayor Giuliani over the past four years in the city, makes one wonder whether that partnership could work effectively for the state.

When compared with Governor Pataki's fiscal bacchanal, Mayor Giuliani's $34.3 billion 1998 spending plan for New York City seems a model of responsibility. But looked at more closely, it appears less restrained. The mayor claims that spending, excluding state and federal aid, will go up only six-tenths of 1 percent in the next fiscal year, less than the local inflation rate, which he anticipates will range from 2 to 2.5 percent. But under the city's accounting rules, the current-year surplus of $1.2 billion gets treated as if it were money spent in the 1997 fiscal year, though the mayor will use it to cover fiscal 1998's expenses. That is, the spending figure for 1998 gets artificially depressed, while the 1997 figure gets artificially elevated. When adjusted for this sleight of hand, the city's spending increase will be over 3 percent. The mayor also uses Consumer Price Index-based inflation rates, which a bipartisan commission concluded overstate inflation by at least 1 percent.

Even so, the Giuliani budget deserves some praise: it completely avoids the state budget's wild excesses, and it can claim a few real victories. Most notably, the mayor has reduced the public-assistance caseload faster than the city originally projected. By June the caseload will be lower than at any time over the last 30 years—below 800,000 from a 1995 peak of 1,151,000—realizing the city annual savings of nearly a half billion dollars. In addition, the mayor offers some sensible tax cuts—chiefly in the commercial rent tax and the sales tax for clothes and footwear—that will add up to $774 million returned to taxpayers by 2003. The mayor correctly points out, too, that he inherited an exceedingly difficult situation in 1994, that he is reserving 70 percent of the surplus for financing projected shortfalls over the next two years, and that, unlike Pataki, he proposes no major new programs that would burden the city's already fragile budgetary condition further.

But if the mayor is putting money aside for future shortfalls, he should ask another hard question: why does the city so regularly have budget shortfalls? Answer: its economy cannot support a government of the present mammoth size and scope. Though with his challenge to CUNY's costly remediation fiasco and his brave talk of the tragedy of illegitimacy in his 1998 State of the City address, the mayor has shown a willingness to begin asking hard questions about New York's municipal welfare state, he still needs to begin dismantling it.

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After Medicaid, New York City's biggest budget buster is its municipal workforce. How can the city's economy grow if it supports a public workforce that receives incomparably more fringe benefits than most private-sector employees? City-funded personal service costs will total a jarring $12.1 billion in fiscal year 1998, a full 9 percent more than 1997. Half of this billion-dollar increase results from the city's new labor agreements, which will grant most city employees a 3 percent wage increase in 1998. In addition, the city's workforce, after three years of reduction, will grow to 205,600 employees by the middle of 1998, an increase of 5,000 over last year, mostly to staff the Board of Education's expanded literacy programs. Especially given the 35-hour workweeks, ample pensions (costing the city $1.3 billion in 1998), non-contributory health-care plans, and lavish vacation, sick-day, and holiday schedules, the last thing the city needs is more employees.

Mayor Giuliani has accomplished more than any other mayor in New York's postwar history, transforming assumptions about public safety in ways no one could have imagined four years ago. New York is now one of America's safest cities, a welcome change that is itself an economic boon to the city. But the mayor can afford a little humility when he discusses the city's economy. The budgetary surplus that Giuliani, like Pataki, enjoys, grows out of a Wall Street boom for which neither mayor nor governor can take credit. The truth remains: New York City has not created a single net new job in half a century.

New York's dependence on Wall Street has only grown: the financial services industry now employs 4.5 percent of the city's workers, but they're directly responsible for 17 percent of the city's wages, up from 11 percent just ten years ago. In addition, a significant number of jobs and wages in the city directly depend on Wall Street. The city's increasing reliance on Wall Street results in a steeply verticalized economy that poses three economic threats. First, the financial services industry is cyclical, and when it turns down, as it surely will, the city will suffer deeply, as it did during earlier downturns in the late

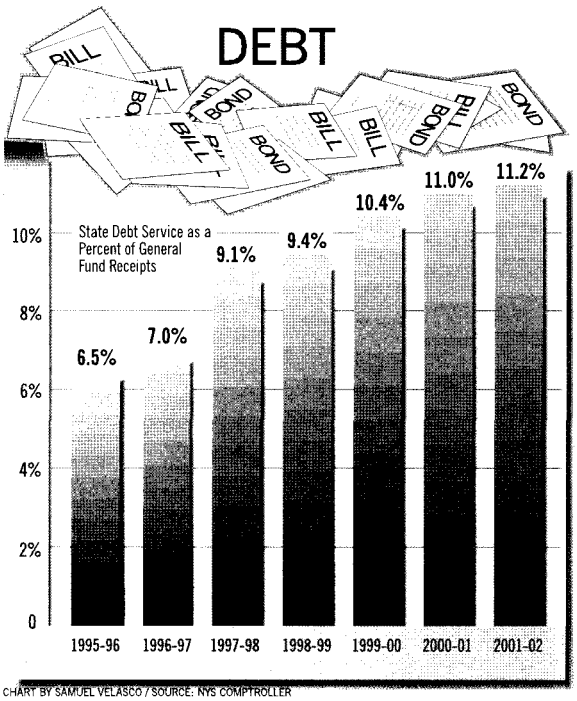

CHART BY SAMUEL VELASCO / SOURCE: NYS COMPTROLLER

eighties and early nineties. Second, technological change could soon transform financial services into a "virtual" industry that has no need to stay in Manhattan or any central city. If this happens, and if New York doesn't diversify its economic base, its preeminence will be over. Last, given that Wall Street leaders know their importance to the city, they will press for continued tax concessions, which they've already received in recent years. But tax breaks given to large financial institutions result in proportionally higher taxes on small businesses—the real engine of economic growth in the United States over the last three decades.

Since Wall Street-generated surpluses won't last forever, New York City, like New York State, needs to get its economic house in order. Unless government spending drops sharply, taxes will stay high, and new investment and job growth will remain a mirage. While Governor Pataki's budget suggests that he may be beyond salvation, Mayor Giuliani, by accomplishing so much in improving New Yorkers' quality of life, raises the hope that New York City has a future commensurate with its magnificent past—if only the mayor will broaden his innovative approach to urban policy to an area he has as yet only tentatively addressed: the city's economy. •

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Gotham's Hidden Infrastructure Boom

Peter Huber

Location: street level, 1133 Avenue of the Americas at 44th Street. It looks like a war room, with a big electronic map on the wall. Lights blink on every building that's been hit. One can easily picture a bustle of generals clustered around, reckoning up the damage—but they're examining a map of southern Manhattan. And therein lies a story. To paraphrase the Walrus, it concerns chips and mips and cybernerds, and megabits and rings.

It is a story about bandwidth, the capacity a wire or radio has to haul information from here to anywhere—to move the e-mail, Web pages, stock trades, TV feeds, and all the rest of the value that digital bits convey. AT&T, Bell Atlantic, Sprint, and WorldCom sell bandwidth. And they sell far, far more of it in New York City than anywhere else. Which is not very surprising, unless you've been reading too much cyber-theory.

According to theory, bandwidth is killing the great city. Tom Wolfe's Masters of the Universe no longer need to pack themselves into the city's cement anthills; they can work their mastery from the wide-open spaces, where the deer and the antelope play. And the oracles of cyber-punditry generally seem quite pleased about it, too. The other thing they say (they're furious about this part) is that there's a dearth of bandwidth. Phone companies could provide it, but somehow they just won't.

The pundits are wrong, on both counts. Bandwidth is here, more is coming, and lots of it. But forget Palo Alto. New York City is where the cyber meets the road.

Private companies are churning out the telecom capacity we need to dominate the Information Age.

You could check out the war room yourself: it's the front office of a company called RCN. You've seen their post-Orwellian posters. One runs in huge block letters on a long billboard along the west side of Times Square: "You choose your President, why not your phone and cable company?" Others, plastered all over the city, depict Lenin's statue, about to be toppled. Lenin represents your totalitarian monopoly phone company, Bell Atlantic. RCN aspires

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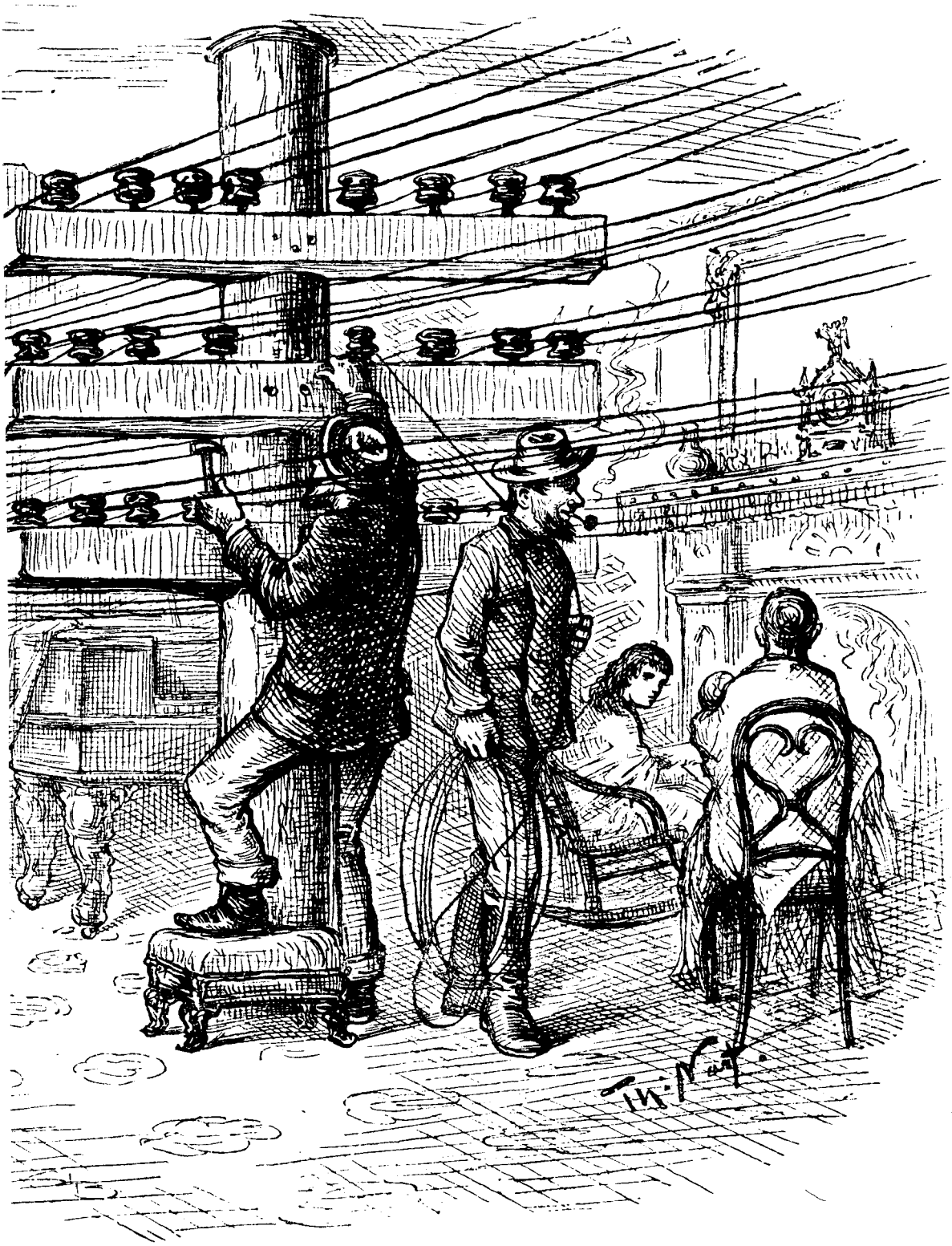

TELEGRAPH COMPANIES WILL DO NEXT.

CULVER PICTURES (2)

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to be the toppler. But if New York were a delicatessen, RCN would have to take a number.

Though RCN has the most noticeable ads, it is a late arrival. For well over a decade, the telecom revolution has been unfolding under the streets and in the air of this vast city. And no wonder: the five boroughs of New York occupy one ten-thousandth of the nation's land area but generate one-twentieth of the revenues earned in local markets by all U.S. local phone companies combined.

RCN mainly targets residential customers: hence the garish advertising all over town. In April 1996, RCN's parent company, Peter Kiewit Sons, acquired 80 percent of Liberty Cable. RCN soon began stringing fiber-optic cable ("fiber" or "glass" in technospeak) under the streets—about 80 miles worth so far—and installed a telephone switch. In August 1996, it began offering competitive packages of local and long-distance phone service, cable TV, and Internet access throughout Gotham's metro area. It undercuts Bell Atlantic's local service by a bit, and AT&T's long-distance service by a bit more. It recently waived all monthly charges for basic phone service for people who also subscribe to its cable service.

The New York metro area is now packed with companies like RCN. Most of them have been here a good bit longer and have done more, though with less fanfare. What makes RCN and its brethren so significant is that just about everything they are doing would have been illegal 15 years ago. Telephone service was a monopoly, established by law; New York Telephone had held an "exclusive franchise" since time immemorial. For state and federal authorities, peddling sex from a storefront on the Avenue of the Americas would have been more acceptable than slipping passersby a ticket to leer at competitive local phone service.

Early in the century, the authorities in New York, as elsewhere, had embraced the idea that telecom should be a monopoly. Competition, they believed, was uneconomical and inconvenient. In 1879, three telephone exchanges had been operating in Manhattan, but they didn't interconnect, and that was hardly convenient. Later, economic theory would definitively "prove" that the whole business was a "natural monopoly," that a single provider could serve local phone markets more cheaply than two or more competitors.

New York was one of the first states to change its mind. The state began opening all its telecom markets to competition in the early 1980s and had largely completed the liberation by 1996, when Congress passed a sweeping new Telecom Act intended to send the whole nation down the same path to competition and deregulation.

As part of that liberation, Merrill Lynch, Western Union, and the Port Authority received permission in 1985 to set up the Teleport Communications Group (TCG), to offer satellite uplinks for the region's financial institutions and broadcasters. Legally, this was something new; with few exceptions, only incumbent monopolists like New York Telephone and AT&T had the right to sell such telecom services in local markets like New York City. TCG linked 17 big dishes on Staten Island by fiber-optic cable to companies across downtown Manhattan. The cable itself turned out to be more useful, simply to transport bits quickly and securely throughout the metro area and to interconnect directly with wire-line long-distance networks of companies like AT&T and MCI. So TCG unloaded the dishes and, with $50 million from Merrill Lynch, began to deploy more glass.

Today, 580 miles of glass and five big telephone switches later, TCG operates the most extensive competitive network in the area, within easy reach of just about every business in Manhattan. In January, AT&T announced plans to buy TCG for $11 billion. Not bad, for what started out as wire to connect a backyard satellite dish to New York's downtown den.

Similarly, WorldCom, AT&T's largest competitor, is buying up a bunch of the numerous other companies now in the same business. It has acquired Metropolitan Fiber Service (MFS), operational since 1991, with a 100-mile network that extends into Brooklyn and White Plains; Brooks Fiber, operational since 1997, with a 28-mile network that reaches out to White Plains and Long Island;

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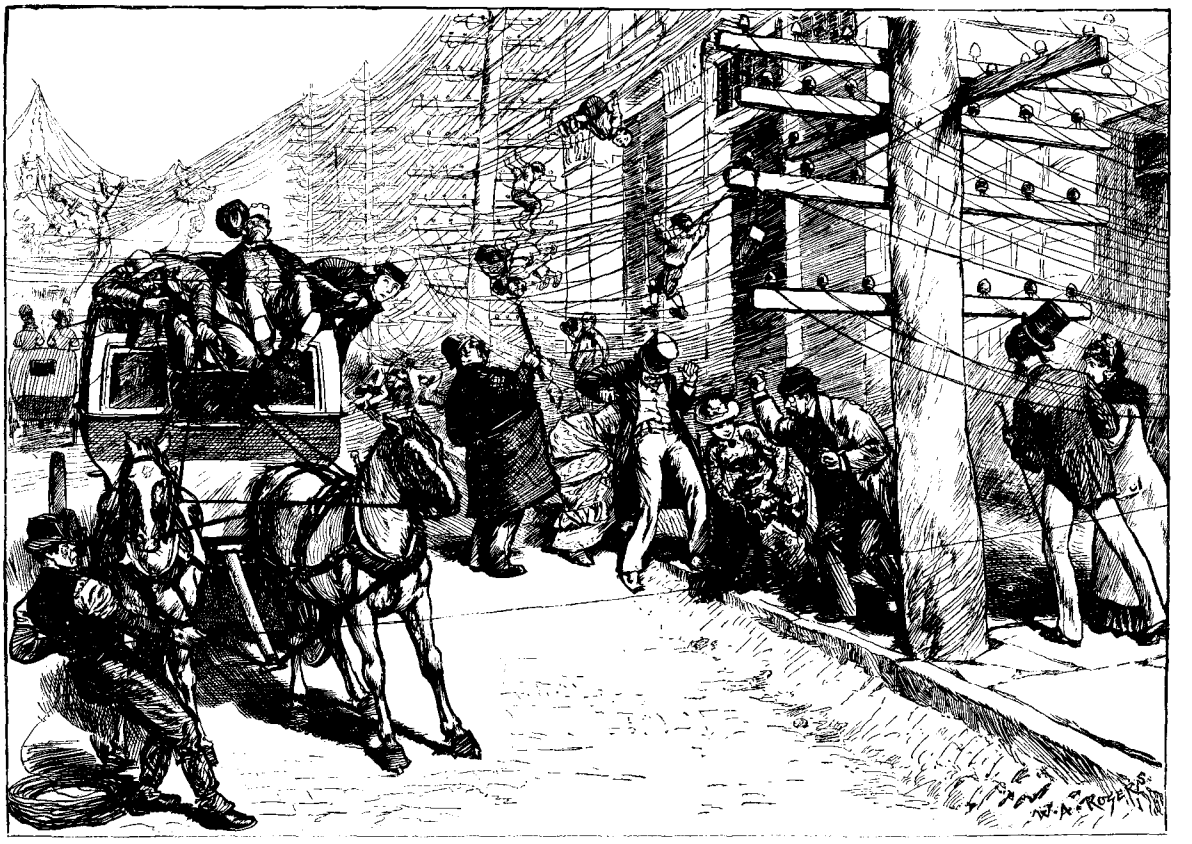

IN THE TOILS OF THE TELEGRAPH—TO THIS COMPLEXION WE MAY COME AT LAST.

and MCImetro, operational since 1996, with a 25-mile network in Manhattan.

Companies like TCG and MFS targeted businesses first, because they generate the most traffic and profit. In New York, as elsewhere, telecom's equivalent of rent control has delayed competitive entry into residential markets. Regulators have pushed down Bell Atlantic's basic residential rates well below cost, and the company makes up the shortfall in part by inflated business rates. Try opening a competitive bakery in a place where the state requires a large, established incumbent to price its bagels below cost. But competition for business customers has begun to put practical limits on such regulatory gimmicks. And rapidly rising demand for new services—wireless and high-speed Internet access in particular—has begun to attract competition to the residential side, too, at least in the biggest cities.

Well before RCN arrived on the scene, Cablevision began providing cut-rate local phone service and high-speed Internet access over a recently upgraded network to businesses on Long Island. Last July the company began serving residences as well. Time Warner now offers similar packages to business customers in Manhattan, over its 77-mile fiber network, with cable specially designed to carry high-bandwidth cable TV and telephone service.

The ground forces are getting plenty of new air cover as well. Six new providers of "personal communications services" (PCS) have recently joined the two cellular carriers that have served the area since the mid-1980s. Among them, Sprint Spectrum, Omnipoint, and WinStar are up and running; NextWave will begin offering wholesale service this year. In Manhattan, wireless phones are pretty old news by now, but there's huge growth now in wireless data. Be grateful: instead of making loud phone calls during dinner at Lespinasse, the Master of the Universe will be able to surf the Net silently on his palm-top.

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It is a lot easier to start a competing local phone company today than it used to be, because competitors are given direct access to the hardest-to-duplicate part, the "local loop." That's the several thousand feet of wire that physically connects your telephone to a nearby "wire center." Tens of thousands of wires converge in a well-fortified basement, and then feed into mammoth electronic switches—highly specialized mainframe computers that process the signals and route the calls. Under FCC and state regulatory mandates that long predate the new 1996 Telecom Act, Bell Atlantic has offered competitors direct access to these loops.

As a result, numerous competitors now "co-locate" their own equipment in Bell Atlantic's New York City wire centers. This allows them to connect their own switches and trunks directly to the far end of the telephone wire that comes out of the wall in your apartment, without having to dig up the streets to duplicate the wire itself. In such cases, Bell Atlantic supplies only a stripped-down "loop," nothing more; the competitor supplies the dial tone, the ring, the billing—perhaps also the customer service, Call Waiting, and all the rest of what turns a wire into a usable service.

Service is a lot cheaper to provide, on a per-customer basis, in densely populated areas than in the boondocks.

Taking advantage of such arrangements, competing local phone companies probably invested about $1 billion in the New York metro area last year. Overall, competitors are known to operate nearly 1,700 route miles of fiber and at least 15 big switches in the metro area. But nobody keeps official count, and there's no process at all for metering the bits moving through these systems. Much of the time, not even the companies that operate the systems know that much themselves.

The competitors are almost wholly deregulated. They must disclose what they intend to charge for local service in tariffs filed with the state, but they can add other services (cable, Internet) or offer promotions so freely that, in effect, they can alter price at will. They market fancy bundles and discount packages. They combine basic phone service with Caller ID, Call Waiting, and voice mail, often at steep discounts, then throw in some Internet or cable TV—or do it the other way around, throwing in the phone service if you take enough cable. Falling prices and improving quality are steadily narrowing the competitive gap between wireless and wire-line service. And because wireless offers the great convenience of mobility, it is beginning to compete with wire-line even at premium prices, in much the same way cable competes with free broadcast television.

Similar things are happening in San Francisco, Houston, Denver, and Miami. The cities attract the bandwidth for two simple reasons. First, that's where the customers are. The New York metro area generates 80 percent of the total local business revenues Bell Atlantic earns in New York State, and half of the total revenues it earns in its entire 14-state region.

Second, service is a lot cheaper to provide, on a per-customer basis, in densely populated areas than in the boondocks. A switch in a Manhattan wire center can reach more customers than one placed anywhere else in the country. A good share of the cost of service lies in deploying and operating these mainframe behemoths, and the more people you can reach with one, the cheaper things get on a per-customer basis. Just 12 wire centers in southern Manhattan generate 30 percent of Bell Atlantic's business-customer revenues statewide. Manhattan has a density of over 100,000 telephone access lines per square mile. In Oswego, New York, there might be 100. Because of the relative shortness of these lines in urban areas, requiring less digging and much less cable, competitors can lease naked loops from Bell Atlantic for about $12 a month. In the rest of the state, they run about $19.

Which brings us back to the big cyber-city paradox. It might indeed be possible to run the world's financial markets from Hot Springs, Arkansas, if you could just plant all of New York's new bandwidth there. But it isn't being planted there. It's

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being planted in New York instead, precisely because that's where the world's financial markets already are. So are the world's TV networks, advertising companies, accountants, and law firms. Demand for bandwidth attracts supply, and supply attracts still more demand. The city prospers.

People who like cities, and people who run them, have good reason to help make sure things stay that way. The objective isn't to deprive Hot Springs of any bandwidth; it's just to make sure public policy gets set in a way appropriate to the here-and-now competitive realities of urban telecom markets.

Here things get politically delicate. The 1996 Telecom Act directs certain key deregulatory calls to be made state by state. The most important of these calls is the last really big issue in U.S. telecom policy: when to free up local phone companies like Bell Atlantic to build region-wide voice and data networks. And the act says that the local telephone company does not get deregulated until it can show that its market is open and competition is under way. Long-distance carriers like AT&T stop the local phone company from competing against them by keeping the policymakers' focus on the places where competition *isn't* happening, not on the places where it *is*. This is why you hear AT&T loudly insisting that local competition is *not* well under way, even as it shells out $11 billion for a company (TCG) that describes itself as "the other local phone company."

The policy calls are hugely important, though few people outside the halls of telecom wonkery have even a vague idea what the fight is all about. The local phone companies still represent roughly half of all telecom revenues and assets nationwide. It's easy to deride them as yesterday's complacent monopolists but foolish to assume that their vast reservoirs of labor, capital, and engineering know-how have nothing to contribute to the building of the cyber-future. Lots of other companies are building high-speed data networks and Internet backbones, and plenty more are selling discount packages of wired and wireless, video and voice, voice and data. But in a market that's growing at double-digit, and in some sectors triple-digit, annual rates, walling in half the capacity of an industry whose entire mission is to transcend walls is going to have serious consequences.

And walled in it is. In its New York City operations, Bell Atlantic currently must stay within the boundaries of "LATA 132," a region that includes the five boroughs of New York City, all of Long Island, Westchester County, Rockland County, and a substantial portion of Putnam County. This obscure but all-important political subdivision is a "local access and transport area," invented in 1984 in the course of the Bell System breakup, which carved the nation into 164 LATAs. Ever since, the law has strictly barred local phone companies from providing any wire-line service that crosses from one LATA into another.

The policy dilemma today is straightforward, and it sharply divides town and country. Regulation may make monopolies behave a bit better, but it invariably makes markets behave a lot worse. Local telecom markets are competitive in the city, or are becoming so quickly. In telecom markets, more than any other, cities can benefit enormously from the simple, tax-free stimulus of deregulation. The cities need to keep building the best, the fastest, to maintain their *raison d'être* in a digital world so eager to flatten them. In telecom, half the industry is pleading for the right to build new infrastructure, and the most important kind—spending shareholder dollars, not taxes, the same way subways and bridges once got built in a day when bandwidth meant moving people, not bits. The best way to get still more glass, more switches, more radios, more bandwidth, more competition, into the city is to deregulate more, sooner. As Ronald Reagan might have put it, standing boldly against the grim backdrop of an invisible barrier that slashes across the cyber-landscape of Putnam County: "Tear down this wall."

Deregulated, unconfined by walls as they already are, competitors like RCN are following the people and the money. They are racing to build new local telecom infrastructure where the revenues are highest and the per-customer costs are lowest. Don't trade your co-op for a hog farm yet. Bandwidth came to level the city. It has decided to live here instead.

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A Lower East Side That Is Vanishing
by Bruce Davidson

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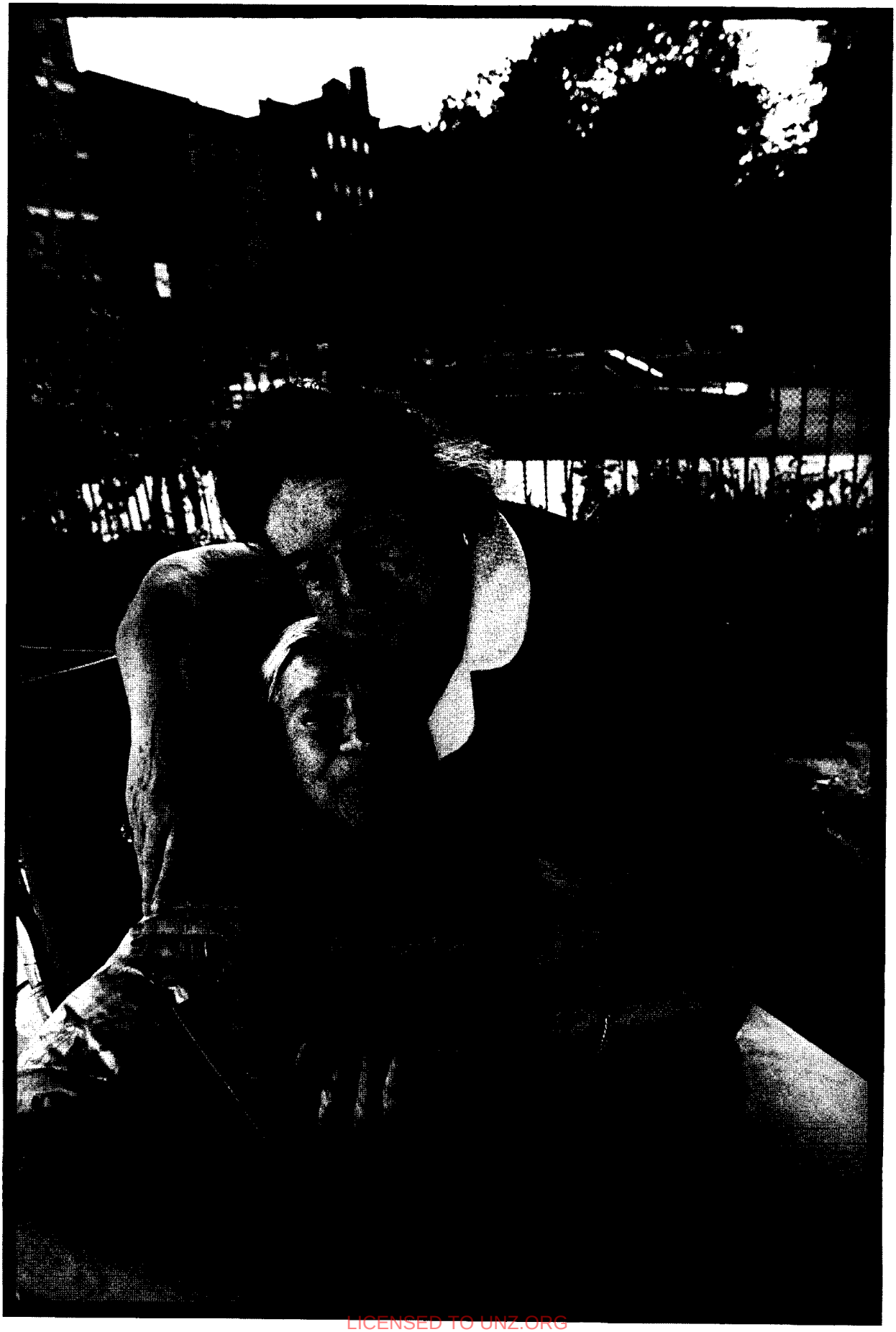

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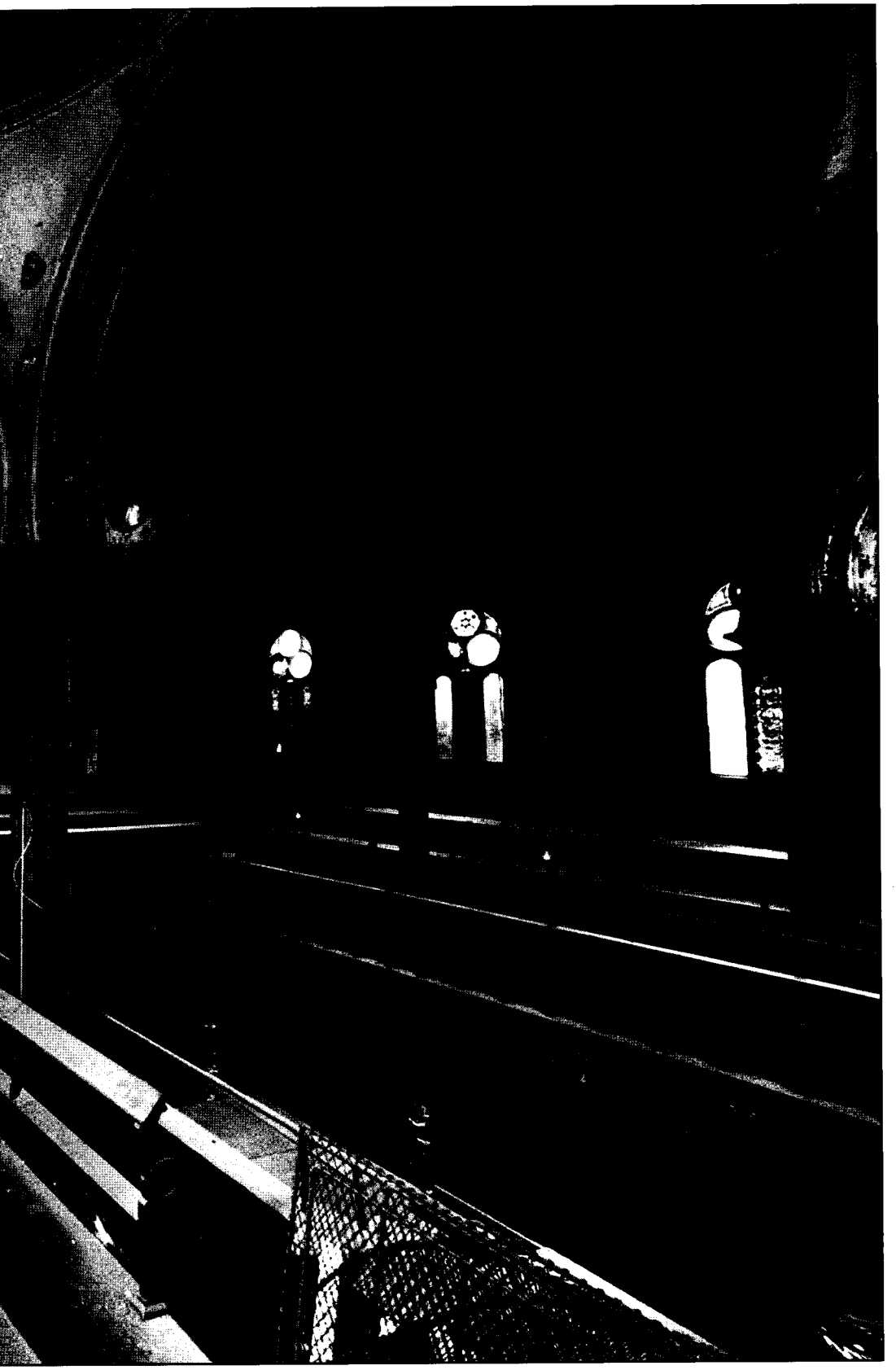

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Urbanities

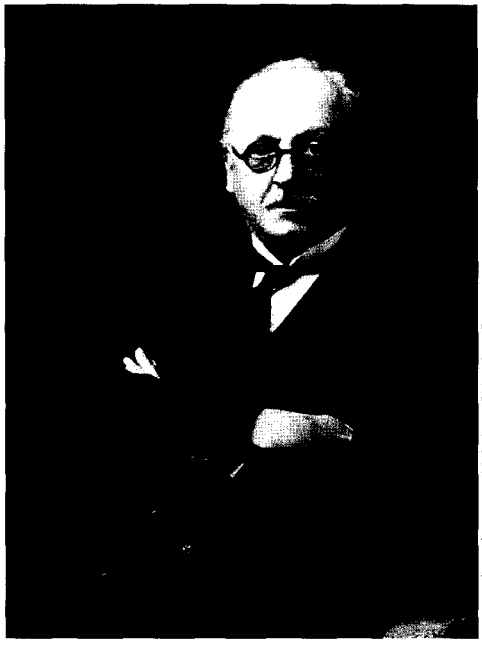
Architect for the Metropolis

Jane Ridley

A classical revival is sweeping architecture worldwide, but so far it hasn't much affected big cities. For the most part, it has produced smallish buildings in the country or in towns. True, Quinlan Terry's Richmond Riverside on the Thames has taught us that classicism can triumph in the outer reaches of the city, but in the heart of the metropolis, architects still design big commercial buildings in modernist or postmodern styles. So the question remains: can classicism work as a metropolitan style today?

Ask that question in Britain and you will receive the answer: Edwin Lutyens. Lutyens (1869–1944) was arguably Britain's greatest twentieth-century architect, but he is little known in America. After all, America has its own architects, and Lutyens designed only one building here: the British Embassy in Washington, a classical work that combines Williamsburg with Christopher Wren. But Lutyens deserves wider recognition in the U.S., for he is one of the few twentieth-century architects who turned his back on modernism and devoted his career to developing—with verve and supreme confidence—the possibilities of classicism as a style for cities.

Architects are not always lovable, but Ned Lutyens most certainly was. He smoked a pipe, he wore round spectacles beneath a dome-like forehead, and he had an incurable habit of making puns. "The piece of cod passeth understanding," he announced when presented with a peculiarly tough bit of fish. "Is Lady Ida down?" he asked the butler when staying with Sir George and Lady Ida Sitwell. Or, when addressing a learned society known as the Royal Society of Owls: "Gentlemen, I lack the wit to woo you." When he angered Lady Hardinge, wife of the Indian viceroy, over some detail of the work he was doing in New Delhi, the balding architect wrote: "I will wash your feet with my tears and dry them with my hair. True, I have very little hair; but you have very little feet." Of course, she forgave him.



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Edwin Lutyens

But beneath the smoke screen of jokes, Lutyens was a deeply serious architect. In his pocket he always carried what he called a virgin, a small pad on which he scribbled designs with a soft black pencil, rubbing out with a blackened finger. No matter where he was, he designed. In trains, in taxis, at meals, he scribbled. Late at night, long after the household had gone to bed, he stood at his drawing board puzzling out the details of designs. He thought nothing of working until 2 or 3 in the morning. His output was massive. His voracious appetite for work nearly wrecked his marriage, and his children found him an absent and distant father. He was a perfectionist. He would go round his assistants' drawings in the office at night, correcting details on tracing paper. When a colleague complained that he was fussing unnecessarily over a detail that no one would see, he replied simply: "God will." God's view: that was what mattered to him.

Taking so much trouble was not merely a matter of professionalism. He was driven. He dedicated the prime of his career to a remarkable project: the reinvention of classical architecture

Munstead Wood

COVENTRY LIFE PICTURE LIBRARY

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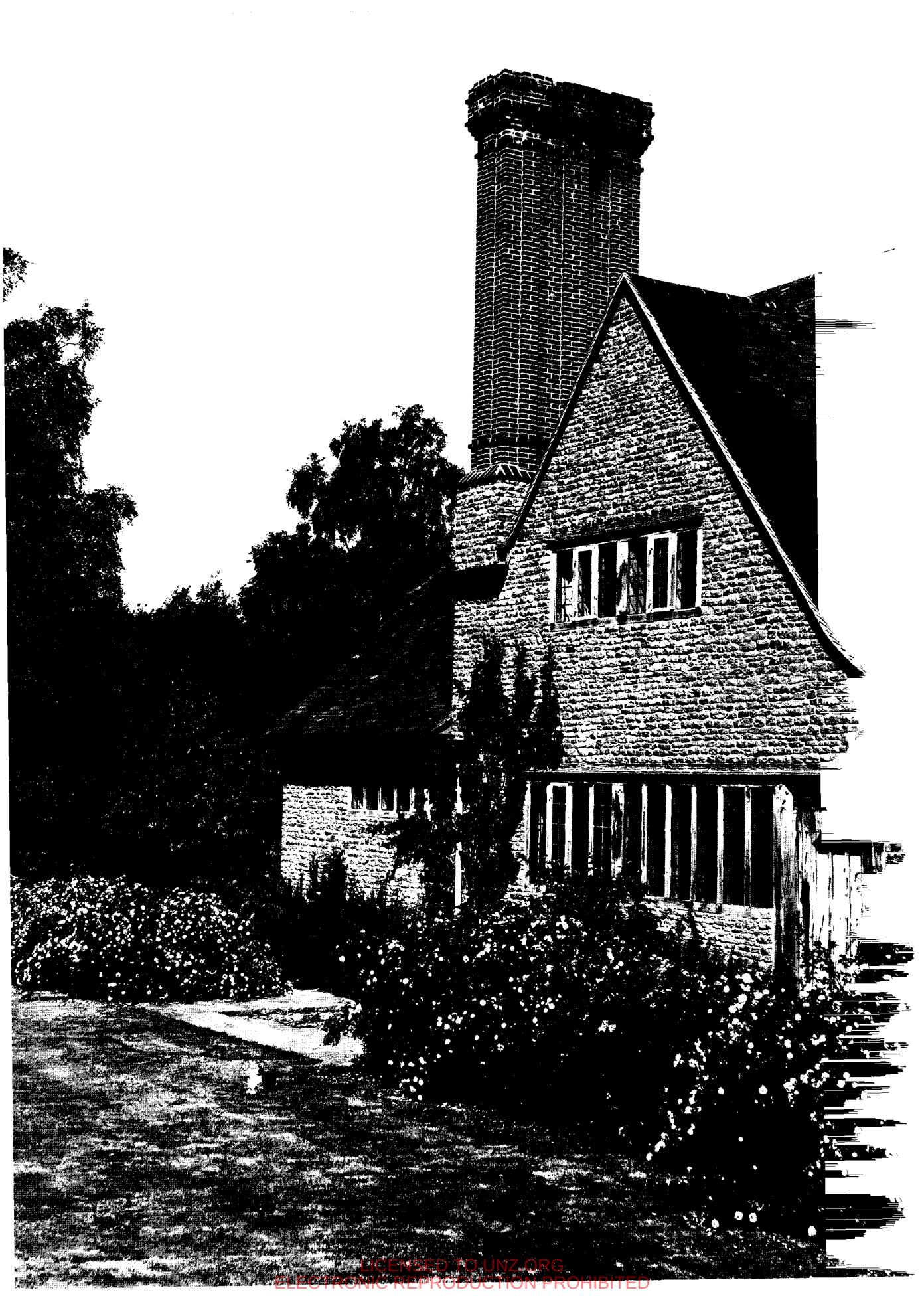

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Heathcote

to fit the needs of the twentieth-century city.

Lutyens's classical passion is especially interesting because he began his career in a very different vein, as an Arts and Crafts architect. He designed his early houses in what became known as the Surrey style, after the stockbroker-crowded county where it began. As an unknown young architect, Lutyens attracted the notice of the great garden designer Gertrude Jekyll. Under her supervision, he designed her house, Munstead Wood. Built of local stone by traditional craftsmen, Jekyll's home—even when new—looked as though it had been there for a century.

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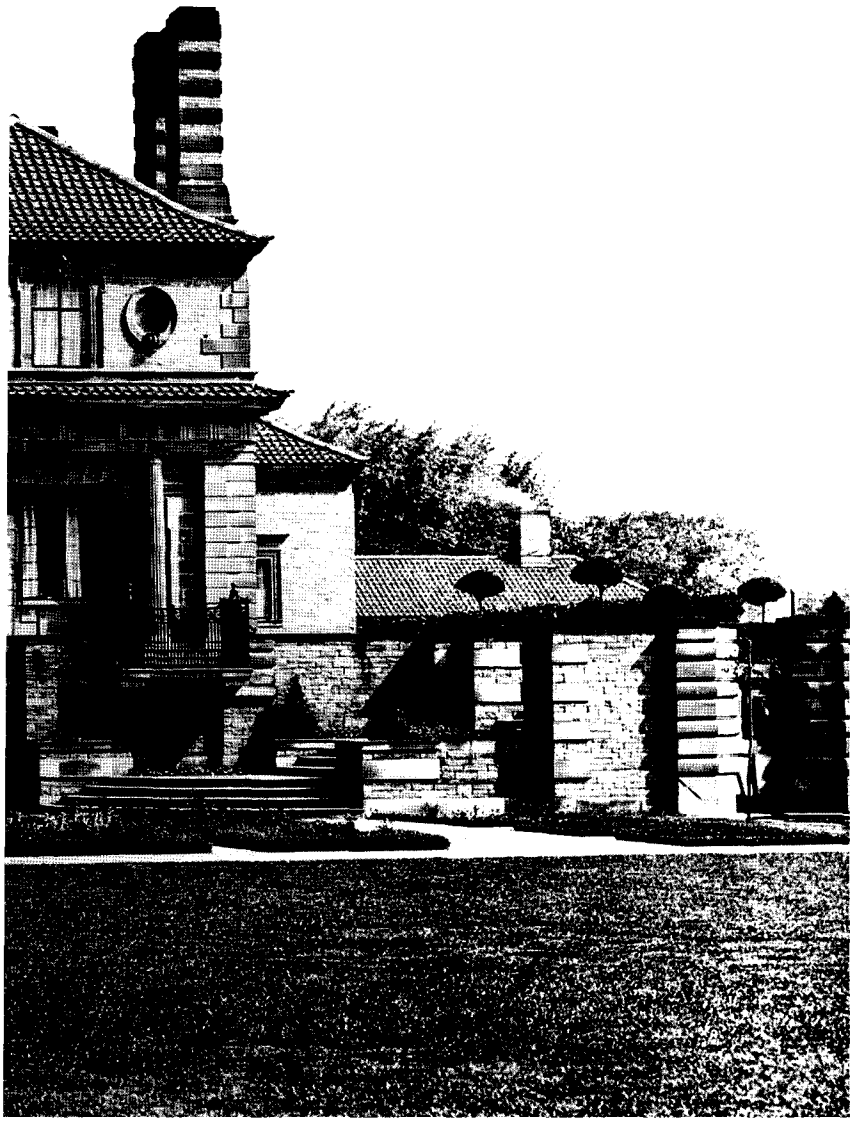

Gertrude Jekyll took Lutyens on drives in her dogcart along the deep, narrow Surrey lanes, and together they explored ancient tumbledown cottages with timber structures and gable ends. Insatiable in her thirst for detail, Jekyll peered through thick spectacles at beams and bricks and fireplaces and seventeenth-century tables that had never moved from the kitchen where they stood. She taught Lutyens how to read an architectural vernacular—how to create buildings that seemed literally to grow out of their site. Ned called her Bumps, the mother of all bulbs, and together they collaborated on over a hundred gardens.

Lutyens was a willing pupil because he knew how to look. He developed that skill through an odd education, since his parents never enrolled him in school. He was the 11th child in a family of 14, and the family had fallen on hard times. His father, a horse portraitist whose cranky ideas made it hard for him to earn a living, believed that he had discovered the long-lost formula for Titian's luminous shade of Venetian red, and he was mortified when the art establishment ignored his ideas. He kept young Ned, his health weakened by rheumatic fever, at home. Instead of learning Latin and Greek, Lutyens studied old buildings on bicycle trips to forgotten, sleepy Surrey villages. Armed with a pane of glass and a piece of sharpened soap, he learned to trace the shapes and outlines of buildings for his father.

Munstead Wood made Ned Lutyens's name. Spurred on by the need to make money to support his new wife, he poured out an astonishingly fertile variety of country house designs. His houses deliberately evoked past historical styles, typically combining classical elements with, say, Elizabethan vernacular. With their steep pitched roofs, long horizontals pierced by tall brick

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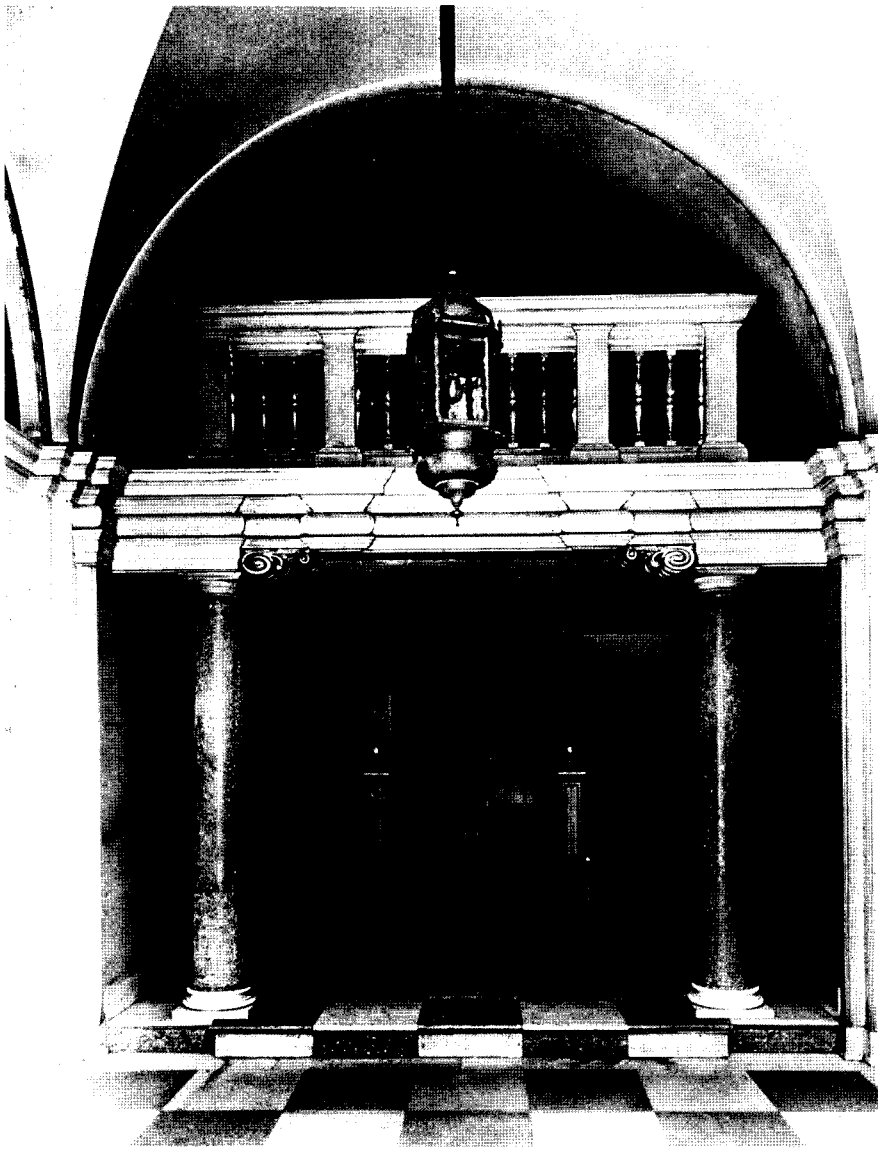
chimneys, and asymmetrical windows, they hint at the shapes of modernism.

Lutyens's best country houses are rhapsodies in texture. He knew how important it was to use a specially made two-and-a-half-inch brick, such as the Elizabethans had used, rather than the standard four-inch brick, and to use seasoned oak and local material. He built one house, Marsh Court, entirely of chalk, with a chalk billiard table. He designed every detail: the door furniture, the fireplaces, the garden paths in herringbone brick, the kitchen dresser, even the humble vegetable rack. Living in one of his houses is to experience that peculiarly English feeling of craftsmanship, like wearing tailored Scottish tweeds or handcrafted leather boots. He loved designing for children, too. He built nurseries with floor-level crawling windows so that toddlers could see the view. I doubt that any other architect had the idea of building a round nursery, as he did, so that naughty children could never be banished to the corner.

His designs received wide publicity. His friend and patron Edward Hudson wrote them up in his magazine *Country Life*, and in 1914 Laurence Weaver brought out a book of sumptuous photos of Lutyens houses. A Lutyens house and a Jekyll garden became the Edwardian dream: a dream of simple housekeeping in the country, of tea and strawberries on the lawn.



Country Life Building (above and left)

His architecture began to change in his thirties, as his practice became more urban. He had always used classical elements—Tuscan pillars around an entrance, or sometimes a classical interior within a vernacular shell. Now the classical began to dominate, a development his drawings record. He became fascinated by what he called the High Game of classical architecture. "In architecture Palladio is the game!" he told his

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friend the architect Herbert Baker, invoking the great sixteenth-century interpreter of classical tradition. "It means hard labour, hard thinking, over every line in all three dimensions and in every joint." Lutyens had embarked on his great journey: the rediscovery and reinvention of classical architecture.

Munstead Wood is a long, long way from the classical splendor of Lutyens's later work, and his turn to classicism has baffled his biographers. He was obsessed by the intellectual challenge of classical design. The complex geometry of the Greeks fascinated him, and he wrestled over the mathematical ratios of great classical buildings. But he was also an artist's architect; more than anything, he wanted to build beautiful buildings, and he became convinced that pure beauty resided in the mathematical purity of the classical orders. "When they are right," he wrote, "they are curiously lovely and unalterable like a plant form."

In 1903 he made designs for a house for E. H. Harriman on the Hudson River. The prospect of working for a multimillionaire excited Lutyens, and his drawings show a proud Renaissance palazzo crowning Harriman's rocky cliff-top site. He didn't get the job—Mrs. Harriman told him it was bad form to engage an English architect—but the drawings for the Harriman house show clearly the way his mind was working. Heathcote, a house he built in the Yorkshire industrial suburb of Ilkley for a businessman named Ernest Hemingway, definitively embodies Lutyens's new mood. Here, in a Leeds suburb in 1906, he marshaled the full Doric order: columns, friezes, cornices, all with their correct mathematical ratios. The unfortunate Mr. Hemingway didn't know what was coming to him. Taking him around the unfinished building, Lutyens pointed to the site of the black marble staircase. "I don't want a black marble staircase," protested Hemingway. "I want an oak staircase." "What a pity," said Lutyens. When the house was finished, the staircase was black marble. "I told you I didn't want a black marble staircase," complained Hemingway. "I know," said Lutyens, "and I said, 'What a pity,' didn't I?"

The timing of his turn to classicism is remarkable. Architecture was on the cusp of modernism. Charles Rennie Mackintosh, born a year before Lutyens, designed the Glasgow School of Art in 1896 and developed into a master of art nouveau. Art nouveau influenced Lutyens, too, as some of his early houses show. Mackintosh died in poverty and obscurity, acclaimed by a later generation of admirers as a neglected genius and pioneer of modernism. Lutyens, by contrast, lived a life of professional fulfillment and recognition. He was knighted, awarded the Order of Merit, and elected president of the Royal Academy, the highest honor the English art establishment can offer. Did he betray his art for the sake of his career? In turning to classicism, did he play it safe, rather than risk losing clients with frightening modernist designs?

Nikolaus Pevsner, the high priest of progressivist architectural criticism, certainly thought so. He admired Lutyens's early work, but his *Buildings of England* series is liberally sprinkled with snide comments about Lutyens's betrayal of early promise, his "fatal" reversion to classicism, his lack of artistic integrity.

Pevsner deplored the classical work because he thought it was mere historical pastiche, or what he dismissed as "historicism." This, for Pevsner, was the ultimate sin—the deliberate denial of the social and political Zeitgeist. The spirit of the twentieth century, Pevsner believed, was the modern movement, a cultural unity that Lutyens willfully rejected. Lutyens, thought Pevsner, should have been building art nouveau or, better still, modernist steel-supported glass walls. After the modernist promise of his early free style houses, he should have "developed," instead of regressing to what Pevsner called mere "period imitation." For Pevsner, Lutyens was the supreme architect of follies, those architectural eccentricities in which the English so loved to indulge.

Pevsner believed that each epoch had a single "legitimate" style, and that the artist succeeded only insofar as he

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Cenotaph, Whitehall

expressed the essence of his time. Modern architecture he worshiped, because he thought it was the style of the masses and the machine, involving the ruthless jettisoning of tradition and aristocracy; it was the instrument of egalitarianism and social engineering.

Pevsner got it wrong. There never was a single appropriate style in any era. It is too simplistic to see architectural history in terms of linear progress. Classicism is not regressive. Nor is it mere pastiche. It is one of several possible ways of designing in the city: not archaeology but a living humanistic vernacular. This

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was how Lutyens saw it, and that is why his city architecture matters today.

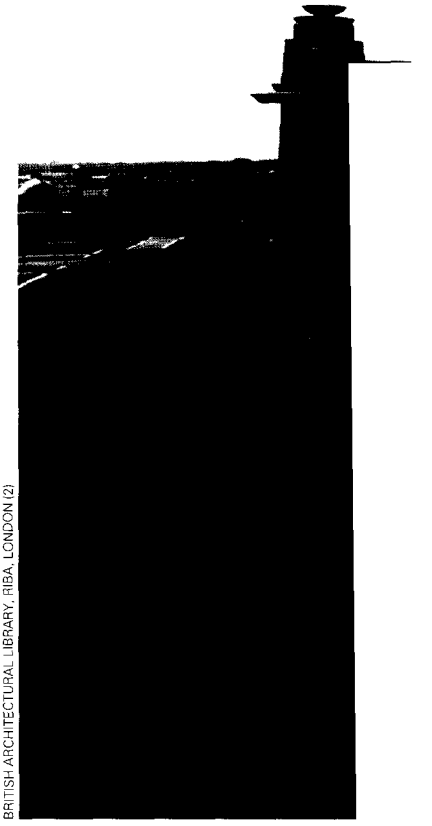
A glance at Lutyens's London work proves the point. The best known is the Cenotaph, the memorial in Whitehall to the World War I dead. This deceptively simple stone block has no straight lines or flat surfaces, like a Greek column. If you follow the line of the verticals, they meet 1,000 feet above the ground, and the horizontals

are curves of a circle whose center is 900 feet belowground. Of course, in 1919 the mourners didn't know that; all they knew was that Lutyens's simple, dignified memorial somehow summed up the stunned grief they felt for a lost generation of young men. Neither triumphalist nor religious, the simple dignity of the inscription said it all: "Their name liveth for ever more."

Lutyens designed eight major institutional and commercial buildings in London. Not all are in the grand manner. At first he experimented, as if unsure of how to build. His first big London office building was the Country Life Building (1904) in Covent Garden for his friend and patron Christopher Hussey. Built in the style of Wren in brick and stone, it is like a slice of Hampton Court Palace. The high brick chimneys are very unusual for London, and so is the steep pitched roof. In fact, this is a country house in the city. The editor's room on the first-floor *piano nobile* was very gentlemanly indeed, decorated in the style of a house of 1700, with an impressive fireplace. *Country Life* magazine was a highly profitable venture, but every sign of trade was hidden away, banished like a madwoman to the attic—literally so, as Lutyens housed the magazine's composing rooms there, beneath the roof.

Lutyens was projecting the image his client wanted: if any institution deserved a country house in the city, it was *Country Life*. The building and the magazine both express a very English attitude toward moneymaking—hide it away, pretend it isn't happening, disown it, and behave like a country gentleman.

Lutyens designed one other institutional London building in brick and stone: the headquarters of the Theosophical Society, that strange religious cult founded by Mrs. Besant. It was a bittersweet commission, since Lutyens's wife, Emily, had converted to the cult, and her consequent insistence on chastity imposed an almost intolerable



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Sketch for New Delhi (left); New Delhi, Viceroy's House (above)

strain on their marriage. The Theosophical Building of 1911 (today the British Medical Society) is Wren's Hampton Court in front, but the rear facade is a grand Italian palazzo—tall first-floor windows punched into a plain brick wall above simple arches. It's interesting because it gives the key to what comes next: great commercial buildings in the heart of the city of London. These are palaces of commerce, and they are built in a style of exuberant classicism.

Take the massive Britannic House, which Lutyens designed in 1920 for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, later British Petroleum. By now Lutyens had learned how to handle classical forms with assurance and wit. He had reached full mas-

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tery of it building New Delhi, the classical imperial capital city he designed in 1912 for Britain's Indian empire. Viceroy's House, with its huge dome and Mogul pavilions in cream and rhubarb sandstone, is his masterpiece, a grand synthesis of West and East.

Anglo-Iranian Oil had a wonderfully invigorating effect upon Lutyens. He enjoyed the company of tycoons; and after the endless bickering over government budgets, which he found so soul-destroying in Delhi, the lavishness of his patrons at Anglo-Iranian came as a tonic—the more so as his personal finances fell into deficit. "I feel as if I had been modelled by Epstein," he wrote after paying a savage tax bill, invoking the broken, pummeled surfaces of the modern sculptor. "Tax vobiscum," he punned.

From the start, he was in no doubt that the style should be full-blooded Roman classicism. His rejected first plan for a classical tower 221 feet high collided with the London building regulations, which banned buildings over 100 feet high. But the design he finally produced for the seven-floor Portland stone building was bold enough. Christopher Hussey described it as "that Edwardian cynosure, 'a raging beauty,' decked, though with a new look, in all the armoury of classical opera." It's a Dame Nellie Melba of a building, and it lifts the heart when first glimpsed next to its drab plate-glass neighbors on the busy city thoroughfare of Moorgate. Its sheer size is very striking. It occupies what was then the biggest commercial site in the city—about 28,750 square feet—but the building is 97 feet high, making cost-efficient use of the real estate it occupies.

Lutyens gave his neo-Roman elevation Corinthian pillars and swags and triumphal arches far, far above street level on a fourth-floor *piano nobile.* "There is no excuse," wrote Pevsner sourly, "for the wretched American vice of breaking out into grand columniation on the top floors." American it may be, but Britannic House is buoyant, curvaceous, brimming with charm and brio. Lutyens had not yet visited America, though. When he did, he thought it a wonderful place: "alive, keen friendly. . . . The scale they can adopt is splendid—the skyscrapers growing from monstrosities to erections of real beauty and the general character of the work is of a very high standard indeed—far higher than anything on the continent or in England."

Britannic House (above and left)

Britannic House occupies an awkward site, one front facing George Dance's curving Finsbury Circus of 1802, the other facing onto Moorgate, a main thoroughfare. Lutyens decided to use the Finsbury Circus front for the main entrance, giving him a challenging concave facade. Inside, he designed a richly curving marble hall and punched massive marble corridors deep into the building's interior. These culminate in a magnificent marble staircase, ascending to the power center of the building, the boardroom on the fourth floor.

To walk from the entrance hall, with its arches of Brescia marble, through the corridor and massive barrel vaults, to climb the steps of Lutyens's white, pink, and gray marble staircase, is to experience one of the great architectural sensations of London. It's a processional space, like something from the baroque palaces of Rome or Genoa. This is princely architecture, celebrat-

BRITISH PETROLEUM COMPANY, P.L.C. (2)

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BRITISH PETROLEUM COMPANY, P.L.C.

ing the power of commerce, just as the architects of the Italian Renaissance had celebrated their princes' power. When he visited Genoa, Lutyens had noted with envy the lavish use of marble and the space thrown away inside buildings on stairs. Here in the 1920s, British Petroleum played the part of Renaissance patron, giving Lutyens the chance to play the Renaissance game in London.

Architectonic drama is all very well, but is it functional in today's city? Britannic House suggests that the answer is yes. Today the Portland stone is clean, and the marble halls are every bit as impressive as they look in original photographs. The developer Greycoat and the architects Peter Inskip and Peter Jenkins restored and modernized the building in 1987–9. Sixty years of London grime and a succession of corporate tenants had left the building shabby, its marble staircase coated in 68 layers of paint. Inskip, himself a Lutyens scholar and author of a monograph on the architect, restored the interiors to their original pristine marble. The Portland stone facades received a careful cleaning. Within the Lutyens shell, Inskip and Jenkins inserted a modern office building complete with the air conditioning, high-speed elevators, and high-performance windows that a 1920s building lacks. This they lit from above by means of an atrium, designed with reference to Lutyens's classical design. To

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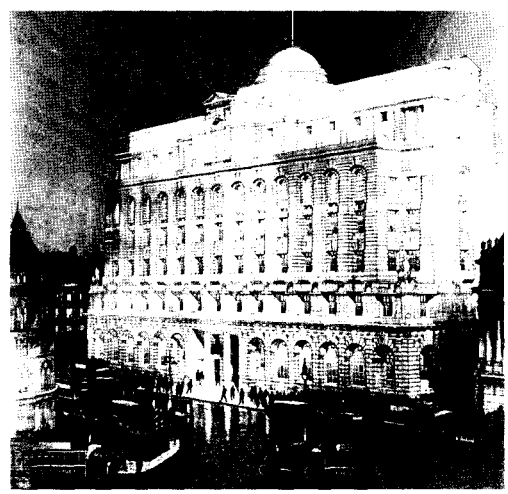
achieve space for the atrium, they removed Lutyens's fourth-floor boardroom from the head of the stairs and reconstructed it in the basement, an unfortunate but necessary compromise.

This massive, award-winning project cost some $60 million. The result is a building that combines the classical grandeur of a Lutyens palace with the convenience of a modern office, which pleases both the preservationists and BP. It is an imaginative and successful compromise.

Down the road from Britannic House stands an even grander Lutyens building: the Midland Bank in Poultry, designed in 1924 and finished in 1939. Lutyens owed his appointment as architect for the Midland Bank to his friend Reginald McKenna, the Liberal politician who was chairman of the bank from 1919 to 1943. McKenna commissioned several country houses from Lutyens, and he did the bank a favor by choosing him. Inspired and cultured commercial patrons are few and far between in Britain, and not many British banks can boast so valuable or prestigious an architectural heritage as the Midland. Lutyens designed four important buildings for the bank: in Manchester; in Piccadilly; in Leadenhall Street, London; and, most important, the bank's headquarters in Poultry. McKenna knew just what he wanted from his architect: "We all aim at getting something that is a credit to the City. We are all anxious not to disfigure the City of London by putting up buildings that are unworthy of the positions that they are to occupy."

The Poultry head office occupies a high-prestige site, facing the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange, flanked by the headquarters of the great banks. It's a difficult site, too. The building has two fronts. One faces the long, forbidding screen wall that encloses the Bank of England. The other is on Poultry itself, a narrow street with no vistas. How do you make a building seem tall and impressive when the spectator is just beneath it and cannot gain a perspective on it? The problem of narrow streets and grand buildings was one that Lutyens had noticed in Italy. Here at Poultry he adopted his own ingenious solution.



GROUP ARCHIVES, HSBC HOLDINGS, P.L.C. (2)

Architectural drawing of Midland Bank

When he made perspective drawings of his projects, Lutyens often chose to represent them from what he called the "worm's eye" view—that is, as they appeared when viewed lying on your back on ground level and looking up. At Poultry he did this to the building itself, creating a brilliant optical illusion. At intervals the vertical plane recedes an inch, giving an impression of steeply increasing height. The entire six-story elevation is rusticated, or rough, and each course of stone is one-eighth of an inch less in height than the course below. The result is a kind of exaggerated foreshortening, rather like a Renaissance painting. Architects love it, because Lutyens is playing here with the most basic building form of all, the wall, and making it stand on tiptoe. I'm sure he took his idea from that grim, blank screen wall that is all that remains of Sir John Soane's magnificent Bank of England (1788–1808); but where Soane's wall is masculine and fortresslike, the Midland is gentle, feminine, and almost seems to float, it's so light.

Inside, Lutyens designed a massive banking hall, which occupies the entire ground floor. Its exotic African green marble columns with Corinthian capitals are outrageously classical. But by making them square, not

Midland Bank

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round, and by filling the aisles with acres of polished teak counters, Lutyens succeeded in creating a space that combines the authority of a temple of finance with the busy modernity of a railway station. Below, in the safe deposit in the basement, he designed a space resembling a *Titanic*-like ocean liner. The grander the function, the more classical the design: the boardroom on the fifth floor is pure classicism, with tall coved ceilings, Corinthian columns, and paneling.

Poultry has weathered the twentieth century better than Britannic House. After a series of unhappy "redecorations" in the 1960s and 1970s, the bank had the fifth floor sensitively restored in 1989. The banking hall was once a cacophony of clattering machines. Today, the electronic revolution has brought a smooth quiet that is almost serene, and the bank feels privileged to occupy such famous spaces.

Great commercial or financial institutions like BP and the Midland Bank cannot afford the luxury of sentimental conservation. They value Lutyens's buildings because they project an aura of grandeur, solidity, and worldliness that enhances their corporate identity. And remember that these supremely confident, utterly convincing, consummately metropolitan buildings are twentieth-century structures, not artifacts of some long-vanished past. Given an architect of genius, we could build their like today. •

The Newest American Credo

Stefan Kanfer

In 1920, H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan, two journalist-critics with little patience for fools, published a list they called *The American Credo*, which Nathan enlarged in 1927 as *The New American Credo*. The books enshrined scores of unexamined beliefs, bromides, and shibboleths held by the Babbitts of their time. Samples:

That the average New Yorker, under his sophisticated and sinful exterior, is really an innocent, sentimental sucker.

That French women use great quantities of perfume in lieu of taking a bath.

That a negro's vote may always be readily bought for a dollar.

That the accumulation of great wealth always brings with it great unhappiness.

That Jules Verne anticipated all the great modern inventions.

That the mistresses of monarchs in the old days always dictated the policies of the country.

That a Sunday School superintendent is always carrying on an intrigue with one of the girls in the choir.

Three-quarters of a century have passed since then, and the *Credo* badly needs updating. Babbittry has changed its character and location. In the twenties, Mencken and Nathan were railing at the Booboisie. On their gazetteer, this large, bland, self-satisfied group dominated the American South and Midwest. These were the people mocked by a fresh-faced magazine called *The New Yorker*, which proudly announced in its 1925 prospectus that the publication would not be edited for the Old Lady in Peoria. There, and in hundreds of places like it, the members of the Booboisie carefully insulated themselves from any ideas that might puncture their smug complacency—so much so that Mencken and Nathan's barbs left them unscathed. "The *Credo* is a failure," Mencken wrote to a friend. "All the notices are favorable. It would have been made by bitter patriotic attacks. As it is, everyone thinks it is sweet and harmless stuff."

The provinces, alas, are not the first place to look for the Babbitts of our day—and don't look for them in the Booboisie, but in the elites. Beltway Babbittry is on display every night, smugly spoken by the talking heads of the news industry. Campus clichés and the received ideas of New York journalism continually bubble to the surface, floating serenely past any ideas that might burst their complacent certitude.

So the *Credo* needs some modernization. Aside from the obvious revision (the Sunday School superintendent would now be replaced by the Chief

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Executive), hundreds of new items suggest themselves. Samples of received wisdom for the nineties (with thanks to *City Journal*'s contributing editors):

That forces, not men, govern history.

That the fuss over the Clinton sex scandals has made us the laughingstock of France.

That the Constitution is a "living" document that needs to stretch and grow.

That, deep down, the mainland Chinese are all merchants.

That we will never make a lasting dent in crime until we find the root causes.

That the fuss over the Clinton sex scandals has made us the laughing stock of France.

That what the relatives of terrorist bombing victims seek is not justice but "closure."

That the public Al Sharpton is a loudmouthed clown, but when he's not on camera he's a serious guy with a lot of progressive ideas.

That Eastern religions have a lot to teach us, but Western religions are narrow, superstitious, and dangerous.

That sexual misconduct is a disease.

That Belfast could solve all its problems if the English soldiers would just go home.

That the U.S. and the Soviet Union were equally responsible for the cold war.

That we need to study the problem—any problem—further before we can judge it.

That women in combat will humanize military service.

That *The New Yorker* is cheesier than it used to be, but there's something worthy in every issue.

That the functioning nuclear family is an outmoded fiction created by the writers of *Ozzie and Harriet*.

That television has made children "visually literate."

That leniency = justice.

That the most dangerous chemical weapon in the world is testosterone.

That "rap artists" articulate a *cri de coeur* from the streets and we ignore it at our peril.

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Urbanities

That the U.S. can't be the world's policeman.

That the best way of combating AIDS is through education.

That statistics showing crime is down and jails full are unrelated.

That the public's glowing memory of Princess Diana is all that keeps the British royal family on the throne.

That since kids are going to do it anyway, we ought to show them the right way to do it in sex education classes.

That inequality = inequity.

That law schools discriminate against females.

That welfare reform will force babies to sleep on grates.

We'll fill it to the brim and then drop it!
Then we'll sit back and laugh as entire populations go prematurely bald, kill each other over parking spaces, and become stereo equipment fanatics!
LITTLE RAMBO

That the most dangerous chemical weapon in the world is testosterone.

That public schools are the most powerful democratizing force in the country.

That this time Kenneth Starr has really gone too far.

That this time Rudy Giuliani has really gone too far.

That it's better for children to be raised by a forthright single mother than to grow up in an imperfect but intact family.

That gangs are just another way of defining "family."

That everything is relative.

That the peace process is a process leading to peace.

That the U.S. government has more information about unidentified flying objects than we will ever know.

That tradition is wrong.

That emotion must always be expressed.

That homelessness is caused by a lack of affordable housing.

That more women are brutalized by their significant others on Superbowl Sunday than on any other day of the year.

That courses in Western Civ. promote the pernicious ideas of dead white males.

That the system should be blamed, not the individual.

That exhaling secondhand

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smoke is an assault, whereas broadcasting music from a portable radio is free expression.

That working for "chump change" is no way to get ahead.

That standards are racist.

That everyone benefits when the poor are shoehorned into middle-class neighborhoods.

That one in ten Americans is homosexual.

That the Scandinavians do it better than we do.

That while Fidel Castro has oppressed his people, he has given Cuba an admirable literacy rate.

That America is a racist society.

That because of a changing world, students should learn to learn, rather than memorize musty old facts.

That children will only learn when they are computer-literate.

That children need unrestricted freedom in order to fulfill their potential.

That boosting students' self-esteem is far more important than giving them subjects to study and memorize.

That the more money spent per capita on those students, the higher the rate of learning.

That the Christian Right is taking over our schools.

That the Internet is rendering books obsolete.

That standards are sexist.

That it's not innocence or guilt that matters, it's what can be proved in court.

That alcoholism is a disease.

That legalizing drugs will solve most of the crime problem.

That pornography is protected by the First Amendment.

That minors commit crime because they have nowhere to go.

That criticizing judges undermines the independence of the judiciary.

That standards are ageist.

That every violent criminal was a victim of child sexual abuse.

That you never hear a really good joke anymore.

That patriotism is as outmoded as the dial tone and unfiltered water.

That "elitist," "judgmental," and "illegitimate" are the most obscene words in the dictionary.

That the generation that came of age in the sixties was the best in American history.

That standards discriminate against the differently abled.

That the UN keeps the lid on conflicts around the globe.

That the audience for serious films is dying out.

That the most salient biographical fact about Thomas Jefferson and George Washington is that they were slave owners.

That if Chaplin and Keaton were alive today they would be writing for *Frasier*.

That gambling is a disease.

That the lower middle class pays most of the taxes in the U.S.

That when someone gets richer, someone else gets poorer.

That liberals, with their redistributionist generosity, are fundamentally moral, while conservatives, because of their belief in capitalism and markets, are basically greedy and selfish.

That it's wrong to make generalizations about race and sex unless the race is white and the sex is male.

That Los Angeles is now the way the rest of the world will be someday.

That Hate Radio is taking over the airwaves.

That it isn't Paula Jones, it's Dow Jones.

And that, anyway, everybody does it.

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Texas Guinan: Queen of the Night

Leo Trachtenberg

New York has always had its demimonde, where the rich and famous flirt with fast living and rub shoulders with the decadent and the criminal. If today's demimonde tends to be dark, even a tad depraved, with its heroin-shooting club patrons, brain-dead music, and sexual excess *de rigueur*, that of the 1920s was, if not exactly innocent, then certainly brighter, and jazzier. Its setting was a constellation of smoky speakeasies and celebrity-crowded nightclubs, awash in bootleg liquor, and ruled by Gotham's undisputed nightclub queen, the celebrated Texas Guinan, wisecracking, besequined, and outrageous. As a symbol of the exuberant twenties, Texas was right up there with Lucky Lindy, Babe Ruth, and Silent Cal.

Born Mary Louise Cecilia in Waco, Texas, in 1884, and educated in Catholic schools, Texas Guinan grew up a virtuoso of the tall tale. In later years, she foisted upon a gullible press a wholly mythical account of her youth. She convinced reporters that she had ridden broncos, single-handedly rounded up cattle on a 50,000-acre ranch, attended the elite Hollins Finishing School in Virginia, and run off to join a circus—all pure hokum.

She claimed, too, that when the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917, she did her patriotic duty, hurrying to France to divert American boys before they faced down the Hun. As her increasingly devoted press swallowed the story whole, she claimed she received a medal from General Joffre, the French commander during the Battle of the Marne. Of course, she had never left American soil. As the country went to war, she was acting in silent movies, a career that lasted until 1922. She starred in 36 movies, mostly two-reelers, though characteristically she inflated the number to 300.

Weaving fanciful stories wasn't her only talent. She could sing a bit, act a bit more, and she possessed self-assurance and ambition to spare. All of it she parlayed into a modest show-business career before becoming the top nightclub hostess of her time. Divorcing her first husband—newspaper cartoonist Jack Moynaham—in 1907, after five years of marriage, Texas moved to Manhattan, though she didn't really settle there for another decade. She became a touring vagabond, one of the innumerable aspiring vaudevillians warbling or lobbing witticisms at customers in far-off outposts of the American hinterlands. She would later have two more husbands, newspaperman Julian Johnson and actor David Townsend, though some question the legality of the marriages. She had lovers as well; but Texas always remained her own gal. "It's having the same man around the house all the time that ruins matrimony," she wisecracked.

When she finally settled down in New York, the brainy, brassy girl from Waco landed several starring roles on Broadway, where her acerbic wit defined her. Her big chance arrived on January 17, 1920, with Prohibition. All over the city, speakeasies, usually small dives, sprouted up; by 1931, two years before Prohibition expired, New York had 32,000 of them, a steady source for police graft. For those seeking entertainment to go with their liquor, a profusion of gaudy nightclubs beckoned. New York's famous restaurants—Delmonico's, Sherry's, Jack's—gave way to the new clubs, more fun to visit, after all, since patrons could enjoy the additional naughty pleasure of thumbing their noses at the law. Texas Guinan dyed her brunette hair flashy blond, gussied up her blowsy figure in glittery clothes, cultivated the right underworld connections, and went to work as a nightclub hostess. In just a few years, Prohibition had made gangsters into millionaires, venal politicians into corrupt fat cats, much of the adult population into lawbreakers, and Texas Guinan into the mistress of Gotham's nighttime revels.

Here's how it happened—or so it's been told. In 1922, Texas was scouting around Broadway for a new career, tired, as she put it, of "kissing horses in horse operas." As Louise Berliner

A young Texas Guinan

EVERETT COLLECTION

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With her clapper, police whistle, and unflappable wit, Texas ruled over New York's nightclub scene.

recounts in her book, *Texas Guinan: Queen of the Nightclubs*, one evening, Texas showed up at a party at the Beaux Arts Café on West 40th Street, a high-class haunt for affluent swells and theatrical grand eminences. Operetta composer Sigmund Romberg was there; so was Pearl White, star of the popular *Perils of Pauline* film serials. As Texas recalled years later, perhaps telling the truth for once, the party was desperately dull. But not for long. "Someone asked me to sing," she recounted. "I didn't need much coaxing, so I sang. . . . First thing you know we were all doing things. Everybody had a great time." Getting people "doing things"—the more inebriated the better—was from that moment on her life's work.

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CULVER PICTURES

That, and getting and spending money lavishly.

Emile Gervasini, the Beaux Arts' owner, knowing a good thing when he saw it, hired Texas as Mistress of Ceremonies. She didn't stay long, however. Joe Pani, owner of the King Cole room at the Knickerbocker Hotel on West 42nd Street, soon invited Texas to run his show, and she gladly accepted. To the King Cole room would come the silent screen's passionate lover Rudolph Valentino, the legendary actor John Barrymore, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, and the serial bride of a long string of millionaires, Peggy Hopkins Joyce (at one time or another Mrs. Everett Archer, Mrs. Sherburne P. Hopkins, and Mrs. Count Gosta Morner). Clearly, the King Cole was a place to see and be seen, no small thanks to the club's new flamboyant hostess.

But Texas didn't tarry at the King Cole, either. After polishing her act, she threw in her lot with Larry Fay, a Broadway hustler, nightclub owner, and mobster. Fay had come up the hard way from Hell's Kitchen, birthplace to many in the city's teeming underworld. Short, dark-haired, and horse-faced, Fay dressed to kill, with a taste for black suits, black hats, and purple shirts and ties.

At first a small-time punk and cabbie, Fay befriended "Big Frenchy" de Mange, a Hell's Kitchen gangster who would later invest heavily in his nightclubs. But it was with the help of a bigger mobster, Owney Madden, that Fay rose from obscurity as owner of a fleet of cabs. His cabs proudly displayed his good-luck symbol: the swastika—not in admiration of the still-tiny Nazi party, but because he'd won a bundle betting on Scotch Verdict, a long-shot horse whose blanket carried the then-still-innocent symbol. Later, Fay would adorn not only his cabs but also his shirts and other belongings with swastikas.

So successful was Fay's foray into business that he tried to list his company on the American Stock Exchange, then known as the Curb Exchange, which turned him down to protect its sterling reputation. After this brush with business legitimacy, Fay sought other opportunities. Prohibition provided him the ideal means of entering the bustling arena of underworld commerce. Driving a cab to the Canadian border, Fay loaded it up with whiskey and returned to New York, where arid customers gladly paid good money for a stiff—and palatable—drink. Calculating his profits, Fay realized he'd hit pay dirt. Soon, fleets of Fay's cabs were busy smuggling booze from Canada to New York.

Fay opened the El Fay Club to help sell the smuggled alcohol, and the instantly popular establishment caught Texas's attention. While still working at the King Cole room, she visited Fay's club at 105 West 45th Street, and found the décor opulent, the entertainment boisterous, and the whiskey, though outrageously overpriced, plentiful. She was soon presiding there from a ringside table, wisecracking with performers and customers.

Giving her a cut of the profits, backing her up with a sexy chorus line, and allowing her free

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EVERETT COLLECTION

rein, Fay gave Texas the setting she liked. That he was a racketeer with disreputable connections, that secret mob money helped bankroll his club, and that gangsters frequented it—none of this troubled Texas. After too many years of middling show-biz success, on the threshold of middle age, at last she had the celebrity she craved.

Texas reeled in customers as did no other speakeasy hostess during the Prohibition years. Pleasure-seeking patrons, respectable and not, elbowed one another for the privilege of having Texas and Fay empty their wallets. From well-heeled Wall Streeters and Ivy League collegians savoring big-city high life to famous athletes, prominent (if errant) politicians, and mobsters galore, good-time Charlies from every walk of life converged on El Fay to whoop it up with Texas and her chorus girls.

As the twenties began to roar, the El Fay Club attracted anyone with money to burn and a yen for illicit fun. It rivaled Jack and Charlie's 21—favored by writers Dorothy Parker and Robert Benchley—as New York City's best-known speakeasy. George Raft, then the top Charleston dancer in town, later one of Hollywood's most wooden actors, was a regular; so was Gentleman Jimmy Walker, former state assemblyman, composer of "Will You Love Me in December as You Did in May?" and soon to be Tammany's nightlife mayor of New York. Ring Larder dropped by, as did writers Damon Runyon and Heywood Broun. Screen cowboy Tom Mix, the indefatigable Peggy Hopkins Joyce, Harry Thaw—who had killed architect Stanford White in a jealous fit over his young wife Evelyn Nesbit—these and other notables thronged to the El Fay for a taste of high-life decadence. And, of course, there were gossip columnists: Walter Winchell, Mark Hellinger, Ed Sullivan, all voraciously digging for—and sometimes fabricating—juicy nuggets for hungry tabloid readers.

Nights at the El Fay, and later at Texas's other clubs, blended alcohol-fueled mirth and sportive bedlam. Armed with a clapper, a police whistle, and her ever-derisive wit, wrapped in ermine, and sporting an array of gigantic hats, Texas impaled big spenders with insults and made them love it. "Hello sucker," her blunt welcome to fat cats on a spending spree, has become common parlance, as has "Give the lil' girl a great big hand," Texas's introduction as a performer walked on the stage.

Some El Fay stories became the stuff of legend. One night, for example, a happily inebriated patron started doling out $50 bills to the entertainers. What business was he in, Texas asked, to have such money to throw around? "Dairy produce," he answered. Without missing a beat, Texas exhorted her audience: "Give a big hand for the big butter-and-egg man." Playwright George S. Kaufman, knowing a great line when he heard it, quickly lifted Texas's improvisation to use as the title to his classic play, *The Butter and Egg Man.*

The money poured in, and Texas's notoriety spread. Fay and Texas netted $700,000 in one ten-month period, close to

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Already on her way to fame, Texas visited the White House in 1922.

$6.4 million in today's money, little of it subject to taxes. And Texas basked in a celebrity that Winchell and other gossips stoked. Indeed, by the mid-twenties, Texas Guinan's clashes with the police and the courts made front-page news across the journalistic spectrum, from the august *New York Times* to the sleazy tabloid *Evening Graphic*. "Two Senators See Guinan Club Raided"; "Texas Guinan Jailed in Dry Raid on Club"; "Freed on $1,000 Bail with Nine Employees After Nine Hours of Mirth in Cell," screamed typical headlines. "I like your cute little jail," Texas cooed after a night in the West 30th Street slammer, "and I don't know when my jewels have seemed so safe."

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Whatever the headlines, the stories that followed invariably wound up with Texas released from jail, despite the imposing array of law enforcement she faced. Federal agents, magistrates, cops—too many of them had hands outstretched, trying to catch some of the big money spilling from the Prohibition rackets. Mayor Chester P. Mills, responsible for supervising Prohibition agents in the city, took his job seriously, but after two frustrating years fighting local politicians over enforcing the booze laws, he quit. "Prohibition . . . is a part-spoils system," he told *Collier's* magazine in 1927. "Three quarters of the 2,500 [New York] dry agents are ward heelers and sycophants named by politicians." Things were so bad that when prosecutors tried Big Bill Dwyer as boss of a New York rum-running gang, they discovered that many Coast Guard patrol ships escorted the lawbreakers into port and helped them unload their illegal cargo.

Of course, police made occasional speakeasy raids, to make things look on the up-and-up and to guarantee continued payoffs for protection. Texas's clubs proved no exception, particularly since their popularity guaranteed news coverage. When police, to no one's surprise, found booze at El Fay, they padlocked the club. Undaunted, Texas and Fay launched the Texas Guinan Club at 117 West 48th Street. When police padlocked that club, the Del Fay opened its doors at the El Fay's old address, raking in the money until it, too, got shut down. An ongoing farce of raids and roundups ensued, with police regularly bringing the befurred and bejeweled Texas—586 diamonds studded one of her gaudy bracelets—and dozens of scantily clad chorus girls downtown for questioning. It all provided a boon to the city's editors and a constant source of titillation for their millions of daily readers.

In 1925, a runaway real estate boom in Florida attracted incautious investors looking for a quick buck. The state had orange groves, pristine beaches, romantic architecture, hungry alligators, and people seeking diversion. So as the suckers drifted south, Texas and Fay followed them, to launch the Miami Del Fay. Like its northern counterparts, it rang up huge profits. A wealthy local realtor, knowing business genius when he saw it, asked Texas to team up with him. Together, they'd take over the world—or at least southern Florida. She refused, in her inimitable style: "Listen, sucker," she supposedly said, "you take them by the sun, I take them by the moon. Now don't let's interfere with each other's business." But as with all booms, the bust arrived, earlier in Florida than in the rest of the nation. As the Miami party fizzled, Texas and Fay returned north to Broadway's still-thriving nightlife. Once back in New York, though, Texas, now a national celebrity, decided it was time to break with her partner of several years.

Fay wasn't happy. After all, Texas was his meal ticket. He wouldn't let her go without a fight, so he threatened her—not a bright move, since Texas had powerful underworld protection, including Fay's old buddy Owney Madden. She hired some muscle, got a heavily armored car, and financed a new club. Facing such fierceness, Fay sensibly backed down. Diplomatically, he sent his former partner flowers, baubles, and, with one eye cocked on her trigger-happy associates, his good wishes for future success. Texas reciprocated with gifts—a magnanimity she could well afford from the safety of her armored car—and launched the 300 Club, her first independent venture.

The new club at 151 West 54th Street was a smash: to be part of Broadway's status elite, you had to make the scene there. That made the club a prime target of Prohibition enforcement in the city, now under the authority of the incorruptible U.S. attorney Emory R. Buckner. In the wee hours of July 4, 1926, Buckner sent five detectives, resplendent in evening dress and squiring two policewomen disguised as Charleston flappers, to join 400 merrymakers celebrating "Bobby Jones Night" at the club. Jones, the legendary golfer, had just returned from England, victorious in the British Open. Exhilarated from his recent triumph, Jones and another golfer, Walter Hagen, did the Charles-

Texas, just back from Paris, 1932

EVERETT COLLECTION

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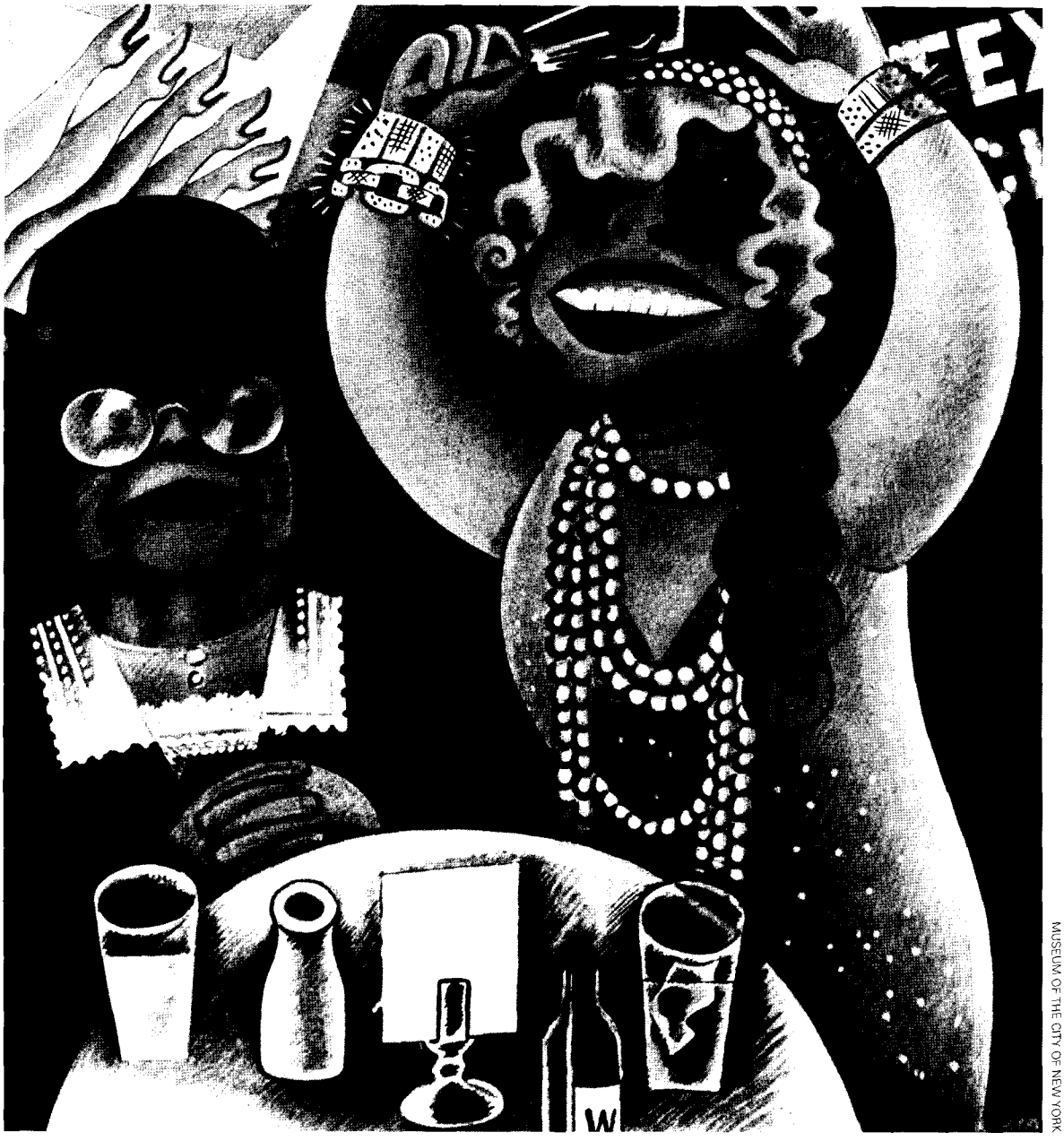

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

A caricature of Texas Guinan, with her trademark jewel-studded bracelets shining

ton, to the zesty cheers of Texas's clubgoers.

Other luminaries from vastly different backgrounds joined the golfers, presenting a fascinating cross section of a hot night at the 300 Club. Looking across the dance floor, we see the captain of the *Aquitania*, the Cunard ocean liner; two U.S. senators; the former president of Cuba; and the comely—and, at 17, underage—Miss Julia Dunn, coquetting her way around tables filled with appreciative and liquored guests. At 3 AM, the disguised cops sprang. The music had to stop, the drinking cease, the frivolity end—the joint was raided. Though one drunken reveler offered to "lick the cops, one by one," others, more prudent and perhaps more sober, slipped away into the darkness.

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Jones and his golfing partners beat it to other parts of town. The senators vanished. The sea captain and the former president of Cuba both escaped unscathed, perhaps on grounds of diplomatic immunity. Police charged Dunn with "objectionable dancing," though a magistrate later dismissed the case against her for insufficient evidence. The cops released Texas and her manager after her attorney posted the $1,000 bail. Unchastened, Texas went home to her 17 West 8th Street apartment, which she shared with her parents and a large crush of statuettes and bric-a-brac.

Texas reopened the 300 Club a few days later, but she was at the peak of her popularity, and law enforcement relentlessly harassed her. In the early morning hours of February 16, 1927, a veritable temperance battalion of police and federal agents shattered the front door of the 300 Club, and announced a raid. Texas was used to being busted; this was the sixth time. But it was to be her crowning moment.

Clad in a garish costume, Texas sounded off as police escorted her to a waiting Black Maria: "Play the 'Prisoner's Song,'" she firmly told the orchestra. To which a gruff detective wittily retorted, "Give the little girl a big handcuff." At the 47th Street police station, Texas entertained a horde of arrested guests, reporters, photographers, police, and federal agents with several renditions of the song, joined by those 300 Club patrons who hadn't yet collapsed from exhaustion. As the reporters dutifully noted the antics for breakfast consumption, the cops and feds relaxed, and everyone enjoyed the show, which lasted, off and on, for nine hours. It was sure better than chasing mobsters and dodging bullets.

Three days after her nine-hour jail stint, Texas faced another challenge: the Bible-thumping Aimee Semple McPherson had come roaring into town from Los Angeles. Their meeting has made its way into urban legend. McPherson was, like Texas, a woman of remarkable charisma and energy and a relentless self-promoter, but in every other way Guinan's exact opposite. While Texas consorted with the devil's accomplices, merrily heading to certain doom, in McPherson's eyes, the attractive evangelist had as her principal mission the reform of wayward souls.

With glamorously permed hair, a white gown, arms laden with flowers, and the scent of attar of roses trailing behind her, McPherson no sooner arrived in the devil's lair of New York than she headed for a closer look at the city's nexus of wickedness, the 300 Club. After a quick warm-up at a dark Greenwich Village dive, where the natives taught her the unholy Black Bottom dance, McPherson swept into Texas's establishment at 3 AM, followed by reporters feverishly writing down her warnings about a city spiraling its way downward to fiery damnation.

Texas welcomed the unusual guest, calling for "a hand for the brave little woman." As the glamorous evangelist stood arm in arm with the bejeweled lady from Waco, how could anybody begin to calculate the vast promotional value of this historic meeting? With the club's patrons cheering wildly, McPherson addressed the room: "This is an experience such as I never had in all my life," she exclaimed. Admonishing Texas and the other revelers to look to the well-being of their immortal souls, she called it a night, graciously inviting everyone to attend her revival meeting later that day, after they'd gotten over their hangovers, presumably.

Texas and her girls didn't disappoint: on the way to another night of festivity, they showed up the next afternoon, chastely cloaked in furs, at McPherson's Glad Tidings Tabernacle on West 33rd Street. As cameras clicked, Texas and her gang joined in the prayers and hymns, and listened with apparent solemnity to the evangelist's soaring exhortations. "A marvelous woman," Texas declared, shaking hands with McPherson as the paparazzi buzzed. Then, her priorities firmly in view, Texas gathered her flock. "Come on, my chicks, let's get on to the club."

Unhappily for Texas and her "chicks," police padlocked the 300 Club for six months in 1927, which proved to be a year of climaxes for Texas Guinan and the nation. The New York Yankees won the pennant by 19 games,

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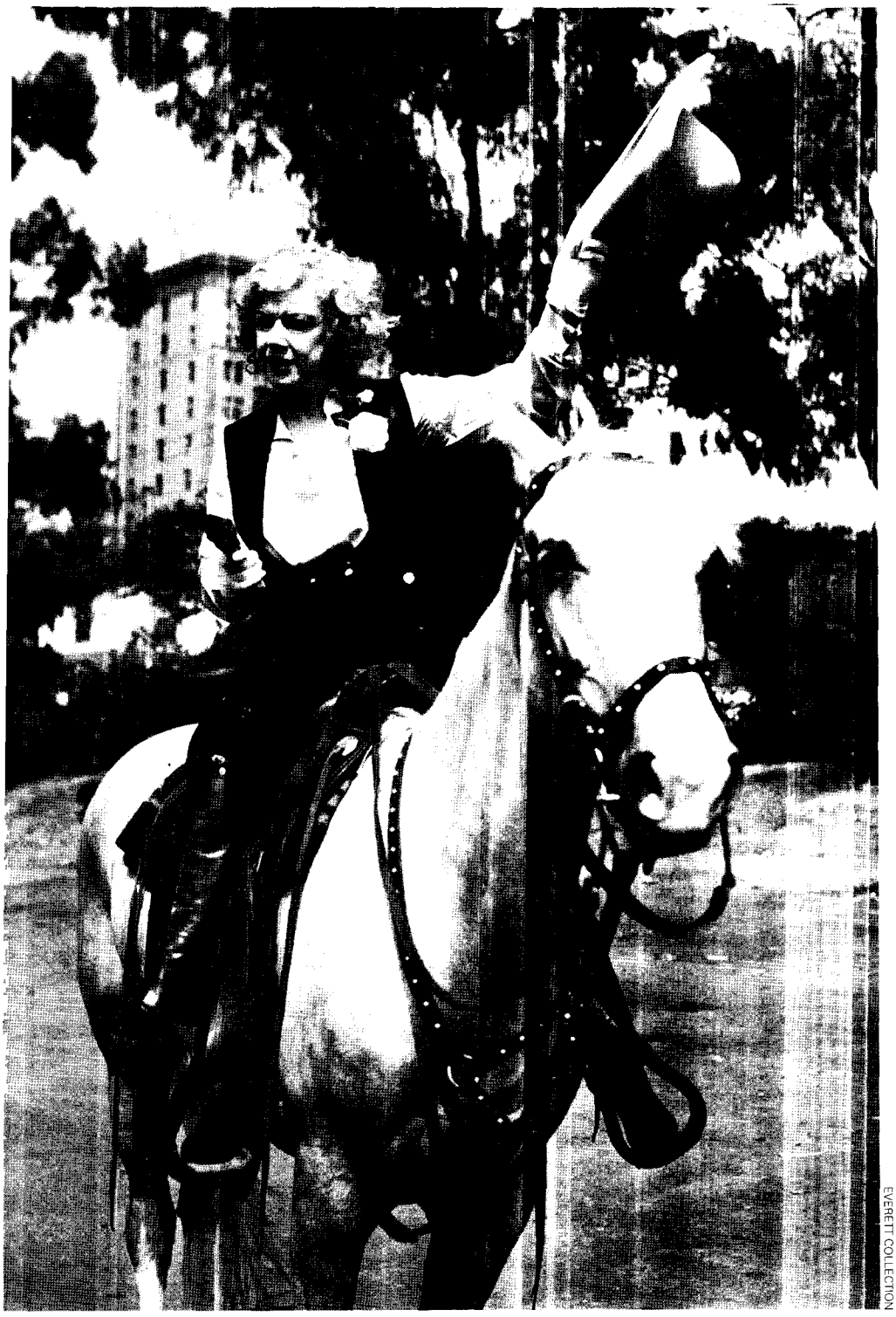

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A pistol-packing Texas on horseback

as Babe Ruth hit his epic 60 homers. Lindbergh flew the Atlantic nonstop. The stock market ascended, suffered a warning tremor in August, then continued its climb to the brink. In Washington, President Calvin Coolidge, a man of few words, but, in the light of coming events, a man of profound intuitions, chose not to run for reelection in 1928. As for Texas, with the decade gradually slipping away, she continued to start up club after club: Club Intime, Salon Royale, the Argonaut—one after another, the hot spots opened, only to have the police padlock each in turn.

Sometimes, when her club had quieted and closed for the night and day began to break, Texas, accompanied by her manager and a few girls, would have herself driven to a quiet Long Island beach, where she untypically relaxed for a few hours, away from the accustomed pandemonium of her ordinary life. It was a strange isolation for this driven woman; evidently there was a hidden side of her that needed tranquil hours and fresh air away from the smoke, spotlights, noise, and booze-charged gaiety. Then, the exertions of the night drained away, as her companions dropped from fatigue, she went home to Greenwich Village to her mom and dad and her plethora of gewgaws. And to sleep until the all-night tempests began again.

But now Texas's day of reckoning was at hand. Not Aimee McPherson's kind of reckoning, perhaps, but a more mundane kind, involving teetering banks, plummeting stock values, and growing breadlines, would bring Texas down. She

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proved no more impervious to the coming disaster than did the rest of the nation.

But before the stock market crash, she had already lost her touch. She produced a mediocre burlesque, *The Padlocks of 1927,* impressing neither critics nor public. Then she starred in an unmemorable film, *The Queen of the Nightclubs,* which also flopped. Nor was Walter Winchell's movie, *Broadway Through a Keyhole,* with Texas again playing a nightclub hostess, any more successful. Though she continued to fence with the law in each of her clubs, the crowds began to thin, the headlines grew less frequent. For Texas and the country, what historian Paul Johnson called the last Arcadia of the twenties was coming to a close.

On October 24, 1929, after several warning spasms, the stock market crashed, wrenching the lives of most Americans. With the ensuing bankruptcies and spiraling unemployment, Texas and her underworld cohorts were in trouble. As former business executives sold apples on street corners, wallets once bulging with money for illegal booze and demimonde high life were now thin and empty.

Texas did her best to keep the good times rolling. As she quipped: "An indiscretion a day keeps the Depression away." In 1931, she briefly returned to the front pages when she took her troupe to France and was summarily sent packing by the French government. Not that the land of the *Follies Bergère* objected to Texas's immorality. It was just that she was competing with French performers during economic hard times, so the ever-practical French would have none of her. Texas seethed: "There's no more liberty here than in Russia. I understand why the French shipped the Statue of Liberty to New York—they don't need her anymore." Still, she took advantage of the French fiasco, organizing a touring revue with the provocative title *Too Hot for Paris,* but despite the occasional ban, there was something depressingly passé about her. As great social and political storm clouds darkened the future, the country had more pressing concerns.

A shrewd woman, Texas realized the only way to stay economically viable was to keep moving, to tour from city to city, to rely on novelty. Once again, her career coming full circle, she was a touring vagabond. But the frenetic pace of life on the road, and no doubt her many years of late-night revels, finally caught up with Texas Guinan. In Vancouver in 1933, she suffered an attack of ulcerated colitis. After unsuccessful emergency surgery, a Catholic priest gave her last rites, and she died, at the age of 49, on November 5, 1933, a long way from Waco.

As Texas died, so did Prohibition, repealed exactly one month after the woman who benefited so much from it passed away. And a little over three weeks later, on New Year's Day, 1934, Larry Fay met a hail of bullets outside his Club Casablanca. Broke and in hock, the once powerful Fay made an unwise decision that not even his swastika good-luck charm could protect him from: he cut his doorman's pay by $40. The disgruntled employee had had enough, and shot his boss dead.

"The funeral I want is a nightclub wake, a motorcycle escort, and college boys singing songs to the cemetery," Texas once joked in one of her clubs. While Texas's final send-off wasn't quite so spectacular, she undoubtedly would have been pleased. Twelve thousand turned out to view her body, and show-business pals filled Frank Campbell's Funeral Chapel in New York with flowers. Movie cameras recorded it all. The *New York Herald Tribune* editorialized: "She was a master showman, and accomplished psychologist. . . . She had ability too, and would have been successful in any one of a dozen more conventional fields. To New York and the rest of the country Texas was a flaming leader of a period which was a lot of fun while it lasted."

As Texas lay on her deathbed in Vancouver, she said, "I would rather have a square inch of New York than all the rest of the world." She meant it, for it was New York that gave Mary Louise Cecilia the kind of life she wanted. And her life in turn has become part of the city's storied past. It was a lot of fun, while it lasted. •

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Oh, to be i

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What Causes Crime?

Theodore Dalrymple

As I browsed in a bookshop shortly after my arrival in New Zealand on a recent visit, I came upon a volume of national statistics, in which I discovered, to my amazement, that New Zealand's prison population is half as large again, per capita, as Britain's. And suddenly that remote nation, so far from Britain geographically and so close culturally, seemed an enormous conundrum for someone like me, with an interest in crime.

After all, for more than a century, we British have thought of our former colony as a better, cleaner Britain. By 1900, New Zealand was already the healthiest place in the world. Almost the same size as Great Britain, it has a population equal to greater Manchester's alone. It is free of the squalor and decay so prominent in all English cities and towns, and if there is no great wealth there, neither is there much poverty. With one of the earliest welfare states in the world, it has an egalitarian ethos, and one can't readily tell a mechanic from a neurosurgeon from his manner of speech or of dress. The way of life is informal, the pace relaxed. Add all this to the impressive per-capita GDP figures, and New Zealand has one of the highest standards of living in the world.

Such a society—prosperous, democratic, egalitarian—should be virtually free of crime, if the commonplace liberal explanations of criminality were true. But they aren't, and New Zealand is now almost as crime-ridden as its mother country, itself the most crime-ridden nation in western Europe (along with prosperous, democratic, egalitarian Holland). Indeed, in

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Parker and Hulme leaving a Christchurch courthouse in 1954.

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the ever-upward trend in the crime figures, New Zealand is only a handful of years behind Britain and, in point of homicide, a few years in advance of it. This fact is of great theoretical interest, or ought to be: it is an overwhelming refutation of the standard liberal explanations of crime.

Browsing further in the bookshop, I wasn't in the least amazed to turn up a book by a liberal criminologist who explained the startling imprisonment statistics by what he called the New Zealand criminal justice system's "obsession" with punishment. In fact, since the number of serious crimes in New Zealand (as everywhere else) has increased at a vastly greater rate than the number of prisoners, it would be more accurate to accuse the system of an obsession with lax enforcement, pleas of mitigation, excuse finding, and leniency—anything but punishment.

Shortly after my visit to the bookshop, my hostess in Wellington recalled over dinner a curious episode from her Christchurch childhood. When she was six, she recounted, her mother had taken her on a kind of pilgrimage to see the very spot in a park where the famous Parker-Hulme murder had taken place six years earlier, in 1954. This murder is the subject of the recent celebrated New Zealand film *Heavenly Creatures,* and in the last two decades it has been the subject of much liberal—that is to say, unctuously *nonjudgmental*—reinterpretation, which the New Zealand intelligentsia now almost universally, and unthinkingly, accepts. This acceptance is a phenomenon of great cultural significance, and it begins to answer the conundrum that so fascinated me throughout my New Zealand visit.

Gifted and intelligent, Juliet Hulme (pronounced "hume") and Pauline Parker had just finished their studies at Christchurch's most prestigious girls' high school. Their relationship was exceptionally close, but the Hulme family's impending return to England threatened them with separation. When Parker's mother refused to allow her daughter to follow Hulme, the girls decided to kill her. They bashed her repeatedly over the head with a brick wrapped in a stocking, having met her in the park ostensibly for a cup of tea and a stroll. The murder was premeditated, as the jocular tone in which Parker anticipated the happy event in her diary proved.

The case transfixed New Zealand and a large part of the world. My hostess's mother took her daughter to the site of this extraordinary murder because of the fascination that evil holds for those who have little personal contact with it. Christchurch in those days was a quiet, prosperous, provincial city that prided itself on its English gentility, that did not have a single restaurant outside the hotels, and that approached nearest to the excitement of wrongdoing in the daily enactment of the "six o'clock swill," that strange institution brought about by a law forbidding the sale of alcohol in public bars after six in the evening. Men would drink as much and as fast as they were able between leaving their offices and six o'clock, with sometimes unedifying results. So uneventful was life in Christchurch that to this day all its inhabitants over a certain age can point to the exact site of the murder, despite the explosion of serious crime in the intervening period.

The shift in the interpretation of the Parker-Hulme case signals a sea change in New Zealand's attitude toward crime in general, a change that has occurred everywhere else in the Western world. Public opinion at the time universally regarded the Parker-Hulme murder as the evil act of evil girls acting in the grip of an evil passion. Nowadays a different interpretation is almost as universal. A well-known book on the case, *Parker and Hulme: A Lesbian View,* by two lesbian academics, Julie Glamuzina and Alison Laurie, sums up today's prevailing opinion.

According to the reinterpretation, the Parker-Hulme case was not a brutal and pointless murder but the natural, inevitable outcome of a grand passion thwarted by narrow-minded social prejudice and intolerance. New Zealand was then a repressed and repressive society, and something had to give. The authors unquestioningly accept the hydraulic model of human

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desire, according to which passion is like the pus in an abscess, which, if not drained, causes blood poisoning, delirium, and death. If society prevented two lesbian adolescents from acting upon their passion, therefore, it was only to be expected that they should have done to death the mother of one of them. The primordial wrongness of bashing people with bricks has vanished altogether.

In support of their hypothesis, the two authors asked a number of lesbians who grew up at the time of the case for their reaction to it. Yes, they replied, they understood the girls only too well, for they themselves had sometimes harbored murderous feelings toward their parents. Both the authors and the respondents overlooked the significant moral difference between occasionally wishing one's mother would drop dead and causing her actually to do so. Nor is this obtuseness exclusive to lesbians. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the film's director, Peter Jackson, as regarding his own film as *nonjudgmental.* This, of course, lays bare the curious moral stance of our age: it is not wrong to bash an innocent woman to death with a brick, but it is wrong to condemn the deed and its perpetrators.

From being branded monsters of depravity, Parker and Hulme now appear almost martyrs to a cause. Public opinion admires them—not because they managed after their release from five years' imprisonment to make successful new lives for themselves, thus pointing to the hope and possibility of redemption (Juliet Hulme has become an internationally acclaimed crime novelist, under the name Ann Perry). Instead, it's because they are thought to have engaged in a lesbian affair at a time of extreme primness and propriety in New Zealand—though Hulme explicitly denies that this was the case. They are believed to have acted upon forbidden desires, the greatest feat of heroism that the *bien-pensants* of our age can imagine.

But of course, if repression of desire were truly the cause of crime, one would have expected the crime rate to fall as social and legal obstacles to the expression of desire were removed. And there can be little doubt that New Zealand has become much less straitlaced than it was in the 1950s. It is far more tolerant of people doing their own thing than it was then. It is thus a natural experiment for the verification or refutation of the hydraulic model of desire.

When Parker and Hulme committed their murder, the whole of New Zealand recorded annually about 100 serious violent offences. Indeed, it was the extreme contrast between the brutality of the crime and the placidity of the country that made it so startling: had it occurred in Colombia, no one would have given it a moment's thought. Forty years later, after continued loosening of restraints upon the expression of desire, the number of violent offenses in New Zealand has increased by four to five *hundred* times. The population has not quite doubled in the interval. Perhaps reporting practices have also changed, but no one could seriously doubt that violent offenses had increased enormously (by 400 percent between 1978 and 1995 alone), and increased in viciousness as well. There is no genre of modern crime—from serial rape to mass killing—from which New Zealand is now immune. Gone forever are the days (within the memory of people by no means old) when everyone left his house unlocked and deliveries of cash to banks in country towns could be left untouched overnight on the pavement outside.

The Parker-Hulme case is far from the only case in New Zealand in which explanation has slid inexorably into moral neutrality and then total exculpation of crime. This moral neutrality, which begins with intellectuals, soon diffuses into the rest of society and provides an absolution in advance for those inclined to act upon their impulses. It acts as a solvent of any remaining restraint. Criminals learn to regard their crimes not as the result of decisions they themselves have taken but as the vector of abstract and impersonal forces upon which they exert no influence.

The most prominent New Zealand case now undergoing exculpatory reinterpretation is that of a woman called Gay Oakes, currently serving a life sentence for the murder of her

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common-law husband, Doug Garden, father of four of her six children. She poisoned his coffee one day in 1994, and he died. She buried him in her backyard: ashes to ashes, dust to dust, and Doug Garden to dug garden, as it were.

The case has become a *cause célèbre* because Doug Garden was by most (though not all) accounts a very nasty man, who unmercifully battered and abused Gay Oakes for the ten years of their liaison. Oakes has now written and published her autobiography, to which is appended a brief essay by her lawyer, one of the best-known advocates in New Zealand, Judith Ablett-Kerr. The lawyer, who is fighting to get her client's sentence reduced, argues that Oakes was suffering from what she calls "battered-woman syndrome" and therefore could not be held fully responsible for her acts, including poisoning. Women who undergo abuse over so long a period, the argument goes, do not think clearly or rationally and must therefore be held to a different standard of conduct from the rest of us.

There is no doubt, of course, that women abused over a long period are often in a confused state of mind. At least one such woman consults me every working day of my life. But the idea that a battered woman suffers from a syndrome that excuses her conduct, no matter what, has a disastrous logical consequence: that battering men also suffer from a syndrome and cannot be held accountable for their actions. No one, then, is individually responsible for what is done. This is no mere theoretical danger: I have male patients who claim precisely this and ask for help in overcoming their battering syndrome. Of the many indications that their behavior is under voluntary control, one is that they ask for help only when threatened with a court case or a separation, and resume their destructive conduct once the danger has passed.

The battered-woman-syndrome concept is uncompromising in its rejection of personal responsibility. The truth is that most (though not all) battered women have contributed to their unhappy situation by the way they have *chosen* to live. Gay Oakes's autobiography clearly, if unwittingly, illustrates her complicity in her fate, though she artlessly records the sordid and largely self-provoked crises of her own life as though they had no connection either with one another or with anything she has ever done or omitted to do. Even in prison, with a lot of time at her disposal, she has proved incapable of reflection on the meaning of her own past; she lives as she has always lived, in an eternal, crisis-ridden, unutterably wretched present moment. Her life story reads like a soap opera written by Ingmar Bergman. And the more that people choose—and are financially enabled by the state—to live as she has lived, the more violence of the kind she has experienced will there be. The lessons to be drawn from her case are myriad, but they are not those that the liberals draw.

Born in England, Oakes went to live in Australia in early adolescence. Though not devoid of intelligence, she chose to follow the crowd in not taking school seriously, and she married thoughtlessly at the age of 16. The marriage didn't last ("we weren't ready for it"), and by the age of 20 she had two children by different men. She claimed to love the second of the men, but nevertheless alienated him by a casual affair with yet another man: her whim was law. Then, still in Australia, she met her future victim. One of her first experiences of him was watching him smash up a bar in a drunken rage.

Before long, by her own account, he was habitually drunk, jealous, and violent toward her. He repeatedly cheated her of her money so that he could gamble, told outrageous and transparent lies, and was lazy even as a petty criminal. He broke his promises to reform time out of number. Nevertheless, the question did not occur to her (nor has it yet occurred to her, to judge from her memoirs) whether such a man was a suitable father for her children.

Four years into their relationship, by which time she had had two of his children, he abandoned her for his native New Zealand. Some time later, he wrote to say that he had abjured alcohol and to acknowledge that he had treated her very badly.

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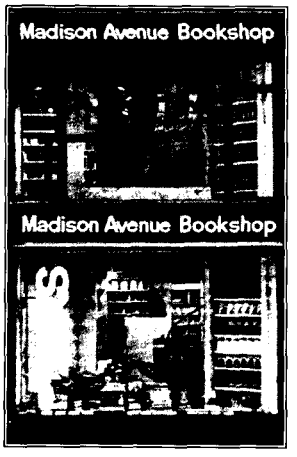

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Would she now rejoin him in New Zealand?

Although she had received innumerable such promises before, although he had abundantly proved himself to be worthless, lazy, unreliable, dishonest, and cruel—if her own account of him is to be believed—she nevertheless entertained his proposal. "All this time, Doug had blamed me for his behaviour and his admission that he was responsible for his own actions had me fooled," she wrote. "I still loved him and I really believed he had finally realised that the way he had treated me was wrong. I struggled with myself over whether to go to New Zealand. . . . In the end, I had to admit to myself that I missed Doug and wanted to be with him."

Having poisoned her loved one six years and two children later, she found he was too heavy to bury without help from a friend. Halfway through the burial (which she revealed to no one else, until the police found the body 14 months later), she feared that she and her friend might be caught *in flagrante* and was seized with misgivings. "I was terribly sorry that I had got Jo [her friend] involved," she recalled. "I had thought we should be just pushing him over a cliff somewhere."

This is the woman whom we (and the New Zealand courts) are seriously invited to believe is a helpless victim, a woman who, though not mentally deficient, seems never once in her life to have thought more than ten minutes ahead, even about such matters as bringing a child into the world. And in this, of course, she was a true child of modern culture, with its worship of spontaneity and authenticity and its insistence that the forswearing of instant gratification is unnecessary, even an evil to be avoided. In this sense—and in this sense alone—was she a victim.

While liberal intellectuals in New Zealand explain away such crimes as hers in this frivolous fashion, the entire New Zealand criminal justice system has come under attack in a kind of pincer movement. Miscarriage of justice of two kinds—one that liberals use for inflammatory and destructive ends, and the other that casts doubt on the sanity of the courts—undermines confidence that the enterprise of distinguishing guilt from innocence is even worth undertaking. If guilt and innocence are so easily confounded, so difficult to distinguish both in theory and in practice, what is the point of self-restraint?

The miscarriage of justice that liberals wave as a banner is the case of David Bain, a young man who languishes in jail, having been found guilty of murdering his entire family one morning in 1994. An Auckland businessman, Joe Karam, has since devoted his life and wealth to exposing the sloppy police work, the weaknesses in the prosecution's case, the incompetence of the legal defense, and

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the immobility of the appeal system that have resulted in the young man's life sentence. Karam has quite plausibly convinced many New Zealanders that he is right, and that his alternative theory of the death of Bain's family—namely, that his father shot them and then himself—is far more credible than the official police version.

Karam himself comes to the conclusion in the book he wrote about it that the verdict proves the essential inadequacy of the criminal justice system. This is an understandable, though mistaken, reaction by a man who has immersed himself for years in a single case of injustice. But his good-faith conclusion is echoed and amplified in bad faith by liberals.

They maintain on the basis of the Bain case (and one or two others) that New Zealand wrongfully locks up thousands of people, and that therefore it must change its criminal justice system completely. What they know full well and artfully suppress, however, is that any system that deals with a large number of cases will occasionally make mistakes, even bad ones, since all human institutions are imperfect. The new system that would replace the old would likewise make mistakes, and not necessarily fewer. What liberals object to in their hearts, therefore, is not this system of criminal justice but any system of criminal justice. For in the liberal view, we are all equally guilty and therefore all equally innocent. Any attempt to distinguish between us is *ipso facto* unjust. Parker and Hulme were just innocent schoolgirls, after all, who did what any such innocent schoolgirls would have done in their circumstances.

Another case of injustice, even more destructive in its effects than the Bain case, is the case of Peter Ellis, a young man accused and found guilty in 1996 of horrific sexual abuse of children in a municipal day-care center in Christchurch. The case has many, and eerie, parallels with a notorious case that took place in the town of Wenatchee, Washington.

It was alleged and supposedly proved in court that Ellis had strung children up, sodomized them, and made them drink urine and have oral sex with him. This continued for a prolonged period, without any physical evidence of his activities ever having come to light. No parent suspected that anything was wrong until the initial accusation was made, and then accusations followed in epidemic fashion.

It now emerges that much of the evidence was tainted. The woman who made the first accusation was a fanatic who possessed and had read a great deal of literature about satanic abuse. The detective in charge of the investigation (who has since resigned from the police) had an affair with her and with another of the accusing mothers. The foreman of the jury was related to one of the accusers. Many of the children have since retracted their testimonies,

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which social workers had obtained by lengthy interrogation. And now the homosexual lobby has alleged that Ellis was accused in the first place because he was a homosexual, and because it was unusual for a man to work in a day-care center. The controversy over the case threatens to degenerate into an argument as to who is most politically correct.

A New Zealand court has given credence to accusations that even the Spanish Inquisition might have found preposterous, a sign oddly enough of how far the courts have come under the influence of the *bien-pensants*, and how much they fear their censure and crave their approbation. For sexual abuse is the one crime that escapes the all-embracing understanding and forgiveness of such liberals, being a crime whose supposed pervasiveness in all ages exposes as hypocritical the pretensions of bourgeois society to decency and morality and makes clear, as well, that any one of us, in the hands of a sufficiently sensitive therapist, might discover his own secret victimhood, absolving him of responsibility for his life and actions. Sexual abuse is thus an intellectual battering ram with which to discredit the traditional edifice of self-restraint and to wipe away the personal responsibility of individuals, and no judge can do himself harm in the eyes of the right-thinking by taking the hardest and most punitive of lines toward it, whether it actually occurred in any particular instance or not.

Where crime is concerned, then, New Zealand presents a curiously familiar pattern to a visitor from Britain (and would, no doubt, to an American visitor as well): a dramatically elevated crime rate, a liberal willingness to explain away the worst crimes except those relating to sexual abuse, and an assiduously cultivated decline in public confidence in the justice system's ability to distinguish guilt from innocence. New Zealand, distant but no longer isolated, is now fully incorporated in the main current of modern culture.

Of course, New Zealand liberals still bang the old drums, too, blaming crime on poverty and inequality. At first sight, the disproportionate share of New Zealand crime committed by Maoris and migrants from the Pacific Islands seems to come to the rescue. The Maoris and islanders are relatively (though not absolutely) poor, and they suffer discrimination (though not at the hands of the government). Only an eighth of the population, they commit half the crime. Ergo, poverty and discrimination cause crime.

But this won't wash. If the Maoris and islanders had the same crime rate as the whites, total crime in New Zealand would still be only one-third lower than it is today. Such a total would still represent a dramatic rise in the rate over the last few decades. Indeed, the removal of Maori and islander crime from the equation would represent a delay of only a few years in the upward trend. Moreover, there were almost as many Maoris, proportionately, in the years when the crime rate was very low, and they were poorer then and suffered more open discrimination. Poverty and discrimination thus don't account for the rise in New Zealand's crime rate.

This rise provides no support for liberal theories of crime, no sustenance for the kind of person who proves the strength of his compassion by conceiving of those less law-abiding than himself as automata, mere executors of the dictates of circumstance. It is true, of course, that the decision of criminals to commit their crimes must have antecedents; but they are not to be found in New Zealand's poverty, unemployment, or inequality. Rather, they are to be found in the prudential calculations such criminals make (the likelihood of being caught, imprisoned, and so forth) and also in the characteristics of the culture, particularly the popular culture, from which they construct their thoughts about the world. And this is a culture that not only despises the achievements of past ages, inflaming ignorant egotism by teaching that we need no connection with them, but is profoundly antinomian—of which there could be no better illustration than the name of a rock band, hundreds of posters for whose concerts were plastered everywhere in Wellington and Christchurch during my visit: Ben Harper and the Innocent Criminals. •

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Letters

Defending CUNY

FPG

To the editor:
Heather Mac Donald depicts City University as a "laughingstock," abounding in loony courses ("CUNY Could Be Great Again," Winter 1998). I teach in the graduate writing program of the English department at City College; one would never guess from her description that Anton Chekhov has been the writer most named as an inspiration by my students. Nor would one know that the majority of literature courses taught in the graduate English department concern medieval, Renaissance, and romantic poetry and the classics of world literature.

Ms. Mac Donald would rid CUNY of Marxists and professors of gender studies. But harsh cuts have little to do with the elimination of courses one might not like; in reality, such cuts create chaos.

Barbara Probst Solomon
New York, N.Y.

To the editor:
For Heather Mac Donald, CUNY declined because of race politics, the 1960s, post-Marxian theorists, (mis-) managing remedial education—and, *mirabile dictu*, CUNY is also responsible for undermining a faltering school system. Her solution? Privatize remediation in community colleges, phase it out of senior colleges, abolish SEEK programs, and redo the curriculum so that it might win approval from the National Association of Scholars.

First, a reality check. Our colleges are staffed, currently, with approximately 5,300 full-time and about 8,000 adjunct faculty—serving 200,000 students. A generation ago, that number of students encountered double the number of full-timers. This hardly can be characterized as a bureaucratic boondoggle.

Second, following nearly a decade of budget cuts, about 70 percent of students now attend as part-timers at some point in their careers. Thousands of our students come from families with annual incomes of around $15,000. Sixty percent are women and the majority of them are parents; nearly as many are minorities from miserably equipped inner-city schools. Approximately 23,000 are on welfare.

CUNY graduates match every national profile for two-and four-year students, a fact Ms. Mac Donald ignores. She should look at where these graduates get hired, and at what kind of income they enjoy. CUNY still turns out more Ph.D.s than any Ivy League school in the country.

To attack students who take eight years for a baccalaureate degree is to attack people who are heroes of their own lives. And if a young, privileged, intelligent woman cannot understand that, she is patently uneducable. Her mean-spirited critique leads most CUNY readers to conclude that she is more interested in exclusion than serious discussion.

In the last decades that she so trivializes, a middle class made up of African-Americans and Hispanics has emerged for the first time in U.S. history. In these same

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years, a significant proportion of working-class "white ethnics" entered CUNY. The alumni of these decades help form New York's various professional cadres—including over half of the black and Hispanic caucuses of the State Legislature. Ms. Mac Donald is trouncing a social transformation and branding its beneficiaries as substandard. Most people would consider this to be racist.

Sandi E. Cooper
Chair
CUNY Faculty Senate

Heather Mac Donald responds:
Professor Cooper's "reality check" fails to address the central issue: has open admissions harmed the quality of a CUNY education? While the percentage of females and welfare mothers in the CUNY student body may thrill a feminist welfare advocate, it says nothing about whether those students are ready for college. Professor Cooper seems to believe that the magic words "race" and "poverty" obliterate any question of standards. But CUNY's student body has never been wealthy and has always contained a substantial number of minorities. That did not prevent the university from requiring college-level qualifications from its students.

The closest she comes to asserting that all is academically sound at CUNY is to invoke the earnings of its graduates—another irrelevancy. At what cost was that boost achieved—measured in numbers of students who dropped out, in the expense of remediation, and in lost opportunity for greater excellence?

Undoubtedly, nothing will convince Professor Cooper that I am not a white supremacist, but I can assure her that the entry of "white ethnics" to CUNY changes my view of open admissions not a whit. But since we're throwing around the epithet "racist" so freely, I would use it for Professor Cooper's implication that blacks and Hispanics can enter CUNY only if it waives the requirement that they know how to read and write.

I am delighted to learn from Professor Solomon that students in City's graduate writing program are well-versed in the classics. City's undergraduate priorities, however, are not so clear. While the undergraduate English program this spring offered 20 literature courses (including courses in black English and contemporary Latino literature), the black studies department offered 32 courses on such topics as Malcolm X and black revolution. Add to that 11 offerings in women's studies, and you have over twice the offerings of the already multicultural English department. Would I like to eliminate such identity-based trivialities? You bet. Would doing so constitute "harsh cuts"? Only if identity scholarship has become the core mission of City.

School Wars

To the editor:
Sol Stern's "School Choice: The Last Civil Rights Battle" (Winter 1998) is shot through with factual distortions designed to union-bash, not improve education.

For example, public school choice and charter-type public schools are widespread in New York City—with support from the United Federation of Teachers—from East Harlem's District 4 to our high schools, which represent the largest choice program in the nation.

Mr. Stern is wrong about the union's padding payrolls. It was UFT monitoring that helped move education dollars from district and central offices into classrooms, where they belong. And it was our contract that finally stopped principals from using valuable teacher time for administrative tasks so they could spend more time on professional activities.

His cost analysis is deeply flawed: the most successful suburban school districts in New York State spend almost double the city's $8,500 per student. City teachers earn considerably less than their colleagues in neighboring suburbs—and far less than they deserve.

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Vouchers are another matter. Numerous school systems around the world seem to do better than ours—and not one credits that success to vouchers for private schools, and every one has a strong teacher union. What accounts for the success of schools in Japan, Germany, and elsewhere? High academic standards, orderly classrooms, a clear curriculum, well-prepared teachers, student accountability, and parental backing at home. These are the proven ingredients of schools that work, whether they are public or parochial schools, urban or suburban, here or abroad. Unfortunately, for decades American public schools demanded too little of students. Now that many school systems are raising standards, students are starting to do better.

Moreover, the UFT's contract flexibility allows schools to waive work rules that block educational strategies they want to try; it supports extra pay for objectively determined merit, such as earning national board certification and additional academic achievements, not just seniority; and it invites schools to form personnel committees to hire staff based on qualifications. Seniority is not the only factor in hiring. Service requirements for teachers who want to transfer are virtually gone. No teacher has a "lifetime job guarantee." Tenure ensures only a fair hearing before dismissal. And the UFT helped turn dozens of low-performing schools around by backing changes in leadership and staff, strengthening instructional programs, and providing staff development.

Inner-city parents want what all parents want for their children—the best education possible. But even a generous voucher program would help just a handful of inner-city children. Only the public schools hold out hope for all our 1.1 million youngsters.

Randi Weingarten
President
United Federation of Teachers

Sol Stern responds:
In a reprise of her union's million-dollar ad campaign, Ms. Weingarten assures us that the UFT is in favor of reform. Were it true, I would indeed be guilty as charged of "union bashing."

Unfortunately for the city's kids, it's pure union propaganda. Let's count the ways. *School autonomy and charter schools*: more than a decade after the creation of the so-called new-vision schools in New York City, the UFT does not even recognize many of them as independent schools with their own union chapters. If the union wanted charter schools with real autonomy, New York State would have long since had such schools. *Incompetent teachers:* the "due process" procedures for removing incompetent teachers remain so convoluted that school boards throughout the state have mostly given up. Only a handful of the state's 100,000 public school teachers get dismissed for incompetence in a given year: out of the 154 disciplinary cases opened in 1994-95, for instance, only six ended with dismissal by 1997.

Merit pay: the contention that giving teachers more money for taking courses is a form of merit pay is laughable. Taking a useless ed-school course does not make a better classroom teacher (See "Why Johnny's Teacher Can't Teach," page 14). These extra courses just fatten the coffers of the ed schools and the UFT (which also offers them). *Seniority*: of course, seniority is "not the only factor in hiring." I never said it was. But the city's principals must often hire teachers they don't want—and whom the school's parents don't want—merely because they've got greater seniority; also, principals frequently have to "bump" excellent young teachers solely because they lack seniority.

Weingarten doesn't think that $8,500 per pupil is enough. But how do the Catholic schools manage to do a better job with less than half that amount? All the more successful countries she mentions spend far less on education than New York does. True, these countries have strong teacher unions. But they also allow families to send their chil-

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dren to religious schools at public expense. In other words, they have, in effect, a voucher system.

The Real Welfare Problem

To the editor:
Heather Mac Donald's "The Real Welfare Problem Is Illegitimacy" (Winter 1998) offers no insight into the problem of welfare.

Ms. Mac Donald doesn't mention the relationship between a welfare system that makes single parenthood a requirement of eligibility and the breakdown of the two-parent family. It was the author's ideological forebears who spawned a system based on the notion of the "deserving poor"—a single mom and her children—so it is no wonder she seeks to expurgate it. Nor does she discuss the need for expanding education in family planning. Instead, she assumes teenage pregnancy results from the knowledge that welfare will cover the tab. But facts get in the way of her assumptions. Western European nations with more generous public assistance benefits than New York have lower rates of adolescent pregnancy.

The author dismisses the notion that there is any relationship between jobs and marriage, and implies that there are plenty of jobs for anyone who wants one. But last year New York had net employment growth of 54,000, enough jobs for just a fraction of those in the city's workfare program.

One of Ms. Mac Donald's remedies for deterring out-of-wedlock births is to give preference to two-parent families seeking public assistance. But this is simplistic. Her desire to stigmatize single parents is apparently more important to her than the quality of the family's life together. She wants two-parent families, without complications, so let's just keep distress in the family, behind closed doors.

Ms. Mac Donald's central premise is that the poor must take responsibility for their own lives. Certainly, taking responsibility is part of the process for many in the effort to break long-term poverty. So, too, is ensuring that people have access to education, child care, and job training.

Emily Menlo Marks
Executive Director
United Neighborhood Houses

Heather Mac Donald responds:
Since Ms. Marks surprisingly acknowledges that welfare contributed to the two-parent family's breakdown, I hope that she advocates welfare's abolition, too. It wasn't the nineteenth-century concept of the "deserving poor" that promoted illegitimacy, though. The architects of Aid to Dependent Children initially opposed including never-married mothers with widows and abandoned wives—the archetypal "deserving poor." Only under pressure did the bill's authors remove any distinction between unwed and wed mothers, thus paving the way for today's illegitimacy epidemic.

The claim that more sex education will reduce teen pregnancy is absurd (See "Sex Ed's Dead End," page 46). Teens already know all they need to know about sex and contraception; what they don't know is how to redirect themselves to more positive activities. Schools should relentlessly focus students' attention on academic pursuits rather than wasting time on condom courses.

Europe does have far more extensive welfare programs than the United States, largely targeted at the middle class. These programs subsidize idleness generally, not illegitimacy in particular, and so have produced the expected economic stagnation. That the European family has only recently started to disintegrate is testimony to Europe's more traditional family values. But the disintegration, now that it has begun, is proceeding rapidly.

I didn't dismiss possible connections between the marriage rate and the job rate, but rather the notion that the fertility rate should be independent of both. Ms. Marks

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refuses to explain why women should feel free to have children at the state's expense with no breadwinner in sight.

Domestic abuse has become an excuse for illegitimacy. While there are obviously cases where a wife must leave her husband, they don't begin to explain the massive out-of-wedlock birthrate. If a man is so unsuited to domestic responsibilities, why is the woman having his child? Ms. Marks's letter confirms what I said about her originally: she regards unwed single parenting as a given, with marriage a mere option when conditions permit. To end illegitimacy, social service providers, along with the rest of society, need to state unequivocally that having a child out of wedlock is irresponsible and immoral. Ms. Marks does not seem ready to do so.

Check!

To the editor:
Nowhere does Matt Robinson's "A Winning Gambit" (Soundings, Winter 1998) say that the Mott Hall chess program was created by the Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF), a private philanthropic enterprise; that the program is funded in its entirety by HEAF; that chess instructor Maurice Ashley is on the HEAF payroll; and that tournament expenses of the Mott Hall chess team have always been borne by HEAF.

It is important to correct the mistaken impression that this chess program in a public school was paid for in any way by public money, since that school has been traditionally starved for funds. For example, this public intermediate school with the highest reading scores in the city has no auditorium, no regular gymnasium, and—until HEAF marshaled the necessary private funds—not even any outdoor playground.

Mott Hall today has a fine record of high school admissions, but virtually no one from Mott Hall had ever gained admission to Stuyvesant High School until HEAF began its test-preparation program; today nearly a dozen students a year routinely enter there, and many dozens more move into Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, and other top schools. HEAF's Support Net then follows them into such colleges as Yale and Columbia.

Mott Hall's remarkable principal, Miriam Acosta-Sing, and her wonderful staff are producing miracles.

Daniel Rose
President
HEAF, Inc.

Traffic Woes

To the editor:
There are ways to improve traffic flow you neglected to mention in your "An Agenda for Giuliani II": no other large city, for example, permits semitrailer trucks in the middle of the city during rush hours; double parking of delivery trucks is rampant; and so forth. But the long-term solution is to build parking garages. Had the city started building them 50 years ago, its economy would be much improved.

Neal Gilliatt
New York, N.Y.

To the editor:
In "Toward a More Civil City" (Winter 1998), Jonathan Foreman says that the mayor should focus on dangerous driving. The Traffic Department should also assign agents to ride in buses. They could get off a bus if it is blocked and ticket the offending driver, and then ride on in the next bus to continue their work.

Edward R. Potter
Flushing, N.Y.

Jonathan Foreman responds:
I agree with both writers' suggestions. Mr. Potter's idea that traffic enforcement agents ride buses could be extended: if the mayor, deputy mayors, and transportation commissioner rode New York's buses and subways every few months, it might have a salutary effect on mass transit throughout the city.

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Contributors

Theodore Dalrymple is a physician who regularly sees patients in an English prison. He is a contributing editor of *City Journal*, a columnist for the London *Spectator*, and a frequent contributor to the *Daily Telegraph*.

Bruce Davidson, a member of Magnum Photos, has had two one-man shows at the Museum of Modern Art. His books include *Bruce Davidson Photographs*, *Subway*, and *Central Park*.

Jonathan Foreman is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a contributing writer at *The National Law Journal*. He has written for *The New Yorker*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *National Review*.

Peter Huber is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and author of the recently published *Law and Disorder in Cyberspace*. He has done consulting and legal work for Bell Atlantic and other local phone companies.

Stefan Kanfer, a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a former editor of *Time*, is the author of several novels and four social histories. He is now working on a critical biography of Groucho Marx.

E. V. Kontorovich is a New York writer and a contributing editor of the *Forward*. His articles have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Review*, and the *New York Post*.

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and John M. Olin Fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Her articles have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New Republic*, *The New Criterion*, and the *New York Times*.

Jane Ridley is a historian at Buckingham University and the author of *The Young Disraeli*. She is a great-granddaughter of Edwin Lutyens and is now writing his biography.

Wendy Shalit is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. Her articles have appeared in *Commentary*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Review*, *First Things*, and *The Weekly Standard*.

Sol Stern, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, has written for *Commentary* and the *Wall Street Journal* and has served as a policy analyst for the governments of New York City and New York State.

William J. Stern is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. He chaired Governor Cuomo's 1982 campaign and from 1983 to 1985 headed the state's Urban Development Corporation.

Leo Trachtenberg wrote and directed documentary films and writes for the publications department of the New York Yankees. He is the author of a history of the 1927 Yankees, *The Wonder Team*.

Our cover painting shows a detail from Childe Hassam's "Lower Manhattan (View Down Broad Street)," 1907 (Lent by Willard Straight Hall; Gift of Leonard K. Elmhurst, Class of 1921. Courtesy the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University).

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Belfast Diarist

Fractured, yet Whole

Jonathan Foreman

I expected Beirut: chaos and rubble. I found instead a quiet city, similar to what working-class London must have been like a half century ago. Though Belfast lies under the daily dread of terrorism, almost no other crime takes place. Terraced houses huddle against incessant rain. At bus stops, drably dressed people form orderly queues. One sees few restaurants, no glamorous stores, no big chains catering to cosmopolitan aspirations: no Gap, no Body Shop, no sidewalk cafés serving croissants and cappuccino. Even McDonalds has just opened here.

Belfast's shipyards, which once sent scores of battleships and the ill-fated *Titanic* out onto the world's oceans, now sit eerily silent. Protestant and Catholic workers had bitterly contended for jobs on the docks; now no jobs exist to contend for. The rusty cranes stand motionless above the city, sad monuments to its flourishing past.

Some parts of Belfast society escaped shipbuilding's collapse. Upper-middle-class Belfast, Protestant and Catholic, prospers. And since the early seventies, the construction, window repair, and law enforcement-related businesses have all done well, as have the paramilitaries. Each paramilitary gang runs its own little criminal empire, selling drugs and shaking down businesses for protection money. In townships where few people hold regular jobs, big new houses have gone up, with expensive cars parked proudly in front. The biggest houses, the swankiest cars, belong to paramilitary gunmen; the rest belong to the beneficiaries of London's effort to solve Ulster's problems by flooding it with money. The British government has poured billions of dollars into the province, especially into Catholic areas, and those administering and those receiving the subsidies have long since shaken off poverty's grip.

One has to look hard for obvious signs of "the troubles." No craters, no rubble, and few military patrols confront the eye. Since the cease-fire, the troops remain barracked. The famed paramilitary murals on the Falls Road (Republican) and the Newtownards Road (Unionist) are fewer than I had expected, and less impressive. Still, razor wire and bomb nets surround police stations, and the police sport firearms and drive armored cars, unlike their counterparts in England. Otherwise, though, the most obvious sign of conflict is the flutter of small flags that hang from working-class district streetlights: in Loyalist quarters, the Union Jack; in Nationalist neighborhoods, the Irish Republican tricolor. And one sees sidewalk curbs painted in tribal colors.

These symbols mark a religious hatred that burned out in most of Europe by the middle of the nineteenth century. But they also manifest something not entirely evil, something that we in London or New York have lost. The Ulster air somehow preserves the solid working-class propriety of the 1950s, as well as a residuum of folk culture that has withstood the homogenizing effects of global pop.

Even in Shankill Road's bleak housing projects, people show none of the anomie of the prosperous West. They belong. They believe. They know their history and connect to it viscerally. Their music and their myths are their own. Strangely, the traditional melodies of both sides are almost identical; only the lyrics and martyrs differ. Because of these folkways, working-class Ulstermen, for all their suffering and for all the economic problems of the province, don't seem lost. Life may be hard, but it doesn't lack meaning. No need for crystals, astrology, or watered-down Tibetan Buddhism to make it worth living.

Visitors to Israel before the seventies also found a whole, if harsh, culture. Perhaps knowing your way of life is threatened makes it seem all the more valuable. It is not a consoling thought that the same forces that feed sectarian violence may be those that fill people's spiritual, psychological, and communal needs. Perhaps we need to look again at why unattractive figures like Louis Farrakhan have struck a nerve in the U. S., and think carefully about what our culture fails to supply. ●

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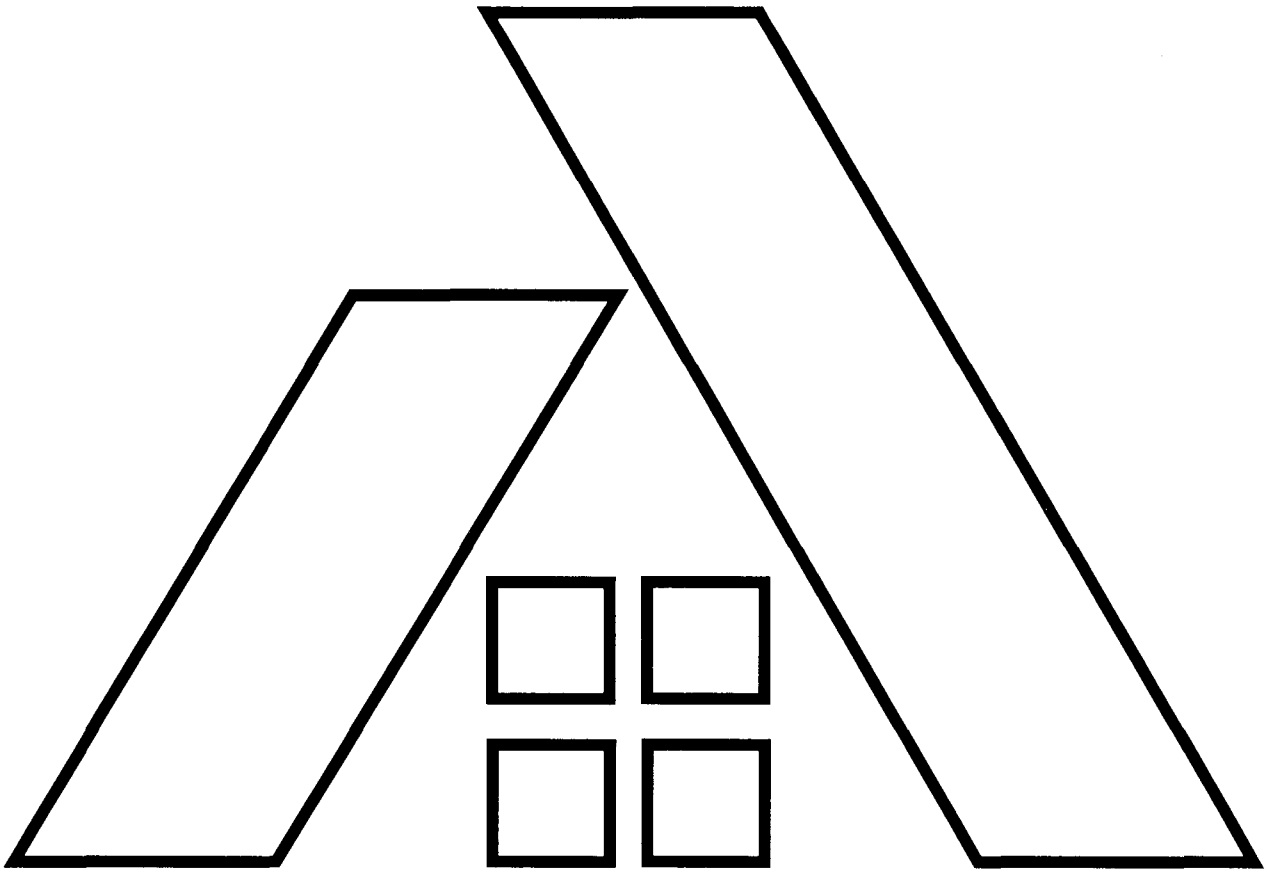

At Atco, we believe that PEOPLE are our most valuable ASSET.

Atco Properties & Management, Inc. is wner and manager of commercial, industrial, esidential and retail real estate in the New ork and Phoenix areas, with ıore than seven decades of xperience.

To us a lease is an ongoing artnership, not a one-time deal. Tenants come to view Atco managers as an essential part of everyday operations. We are quick to respond and easy to access. And through close observation and valuable suggestions, we anticipate our clients' needs to help make their businesses flourish.

ATCO
Properties & Management, Inc.

Headquarters:
555 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10017
212-687-5154 Fax: 212-682-7599

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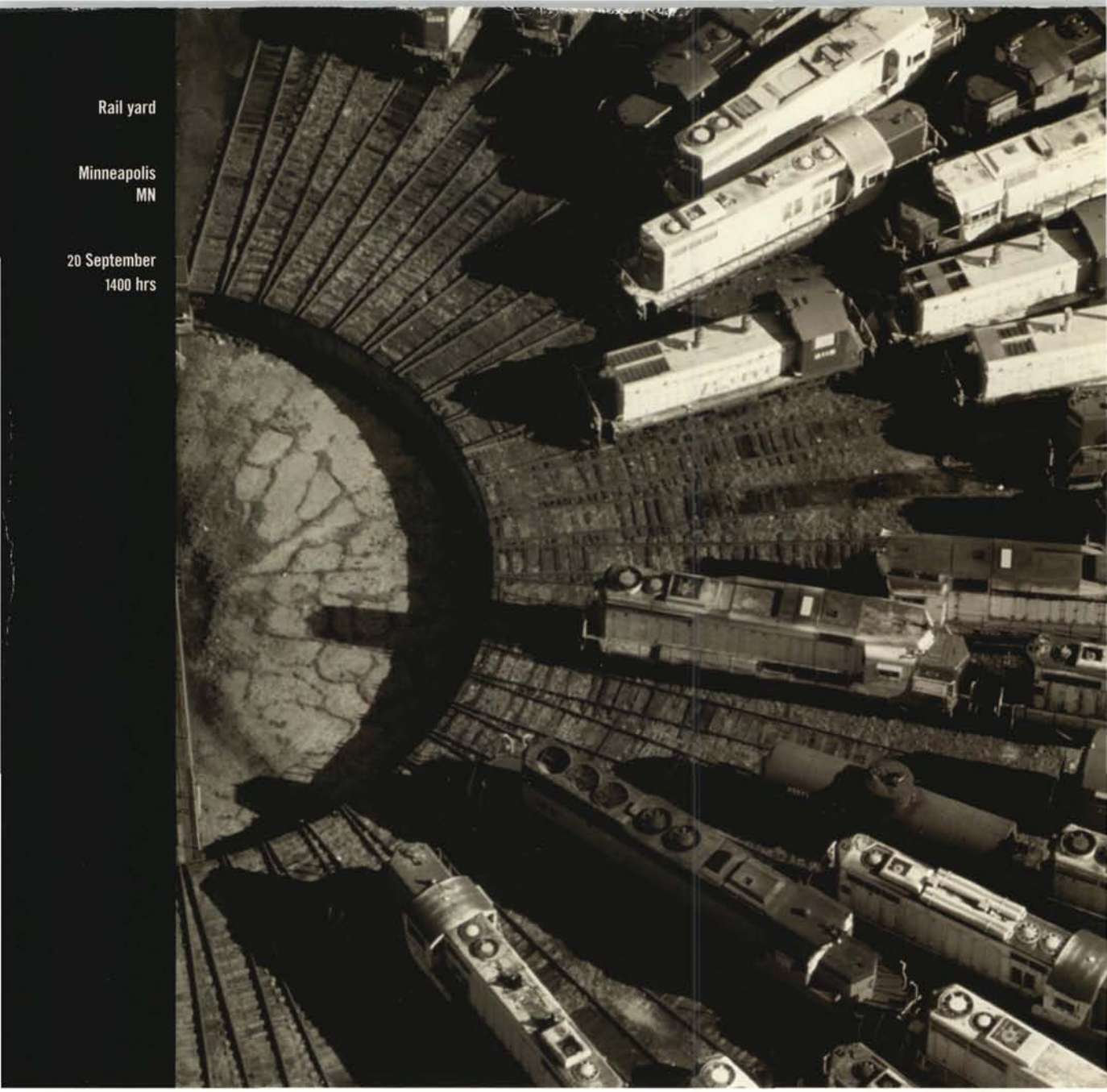

WITHOUT THE RIGHT COVERAGE, YOUR COMPANY CAN BE FLATTENED BY A TRAIN THAT'S STANDING STILL.

All it takes is a rail strike, a streak of bad weather or a sudden change in an exchange rate and your company's bottom line can sustain a major injury. So businesses require a partner that can anticipate and protect against multiple risks with innovative solutions.

AIG Risk Finance is that partner. With our financial resources, insurance underwriting and capital markets expertise, we can bundle together risks other financial institutions can't assume. When AIG Risk Finance combines a company's financial and insurance risk into a single program, the integrated coverage can create efficiencies that might not be realized using more traditional forms of risk management.

For instance, our Commodity-Embedded Insurance (COIN) program limits the earnings per share impact for our clients by joining traditional insurance risks with financial exposures like primary commodities, foreign exchange and interest rate fluctuations.

AIG Risk Finance, a division of the AIG Companies, has access to an unparalleled global network, with operations in approximately 130 countries and jurisdictions worldwide. And we have top financial ratings to back us up. So we'll be there to help your business stay on the right track.

AIG

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